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Modi speaks with Netanyahu, discusses India-Israel strategic ties

Leaders exchange New Year greetings, reaffirm zero tolerance on terrorism, back durable regional peace

NEW DELHI

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday (January 7, 2026) spoke with his Israeli counterpart Benjamin Netanyahu, exchanging New Year greetings and discussing ways to further strengthen the India-Israel strategic partnership, while also reviewing the situation in West Asia and the proposed Gaza Peace Plan.

According to a statement from the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), Mr. Netanyahu called Modi and shared an update on developments in the region, including the Gaza peace initiative. The two leaders wished peace and prosperity to the people of both countries and reiterated their commitment to closer bilateral cooperation.

Happy to speak with my friend, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and to convey to him and to the people of Israel my best wishes for the new year. We discussed ways to further strengthen the strategic partnership between India and Israel in the coming year. We also exchanged views on the regional situation and reaffirmed our shared determination to combat terrorism with even greater resolve.

—Narendra Modi, PM of India

"The Prime Minister reaffirmed India's consistent support for efforts towards a just and durable peace in the region," the PMO said, underlining New Delhi's long-standing position on dialogue and stability in West Asia.

In a post on X, Modi said he was "glad to speak" with his "friend" Benjamin Netanyahu and noted that the leaders discussed ways to deepen the India-Israel Strategic Partnership in the year ahead. Both leaders exchanged views on the regional security situation and reaffirmed their shared resolve to combat terrorism with greater determination.

The statement added that the two sides reiterated a zero-tolerance approach towards terrorism "in all its forms and manifestations" and agreed to continue cooperation based on shared democratic values, mutual trust and a forward-looking vision.

The conversation followed an earlier exchange between the two leaders in December, when Netanyahu had briefed Modi on the West Asia situation. India had then reiterated support for early implementation of the Gaza Peace Plan.

A week later, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar met Netanyahu, with both sides expressing confidence that cooperation in areas such as technology, economy, connectivity and security would continue to grow.

India's GDP growth projected to be 7.4% in FY26

NEW DELHI

India's economy is projected to grow at a robust 7.4% in the financial year 2025-26, according to the first advance estimates of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) released by the National Statistics Office (NSO), up from 6.5% in the previous year. Nominal GDP is expected to rise by 8.0%, reflecting strong overall economic momentum.

The services sector is estimated to be the primary driver, contributing to a projected real GVA growth of 7.3%. Within the tertiary sector, Financial, Real Estate, and Professional Services, along with Public Administration, Defence, and Other Services, are expected to expand by 9.9% at constant prices. Trade, Hotels, Transport, Communication, and Broadcasting-related services are forecast to grow 7.5%. Manufacturing and construction in the secondary sector are estimated to expand by 7.0%, while agriculture and allied activities are expected to record moderate growth of 3.1%. Utility services, including electricity, gas, and water supply, are projected to grow 2.1%.

Private consumption is anticipated to rise by 7.0%, and gross fixed capital formation is expected to increase by 7.8%, up from 7.1% in FY 2024-25.

RBI GDP growth estimates

FY 2025-26 (Annual)

- *Projected Growth: 7.3%*

Quarterly Projections:

- *Q3 2025-26: 7.0%*
- *Q4 2025-26: 6.5%*

FY 2026-27 (Q1 & Q2)

- *Q1 2026-27: 6.7%*
- *Q2 2026-27: 6.8%*

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has projected GDP growth at 7.3% for FY 2025-26, noting sustained domestic activity with strong rural demand, improving urban consumption, healthy investment, and steady manufacturing and services growth. Agricultural output, GST rationalisation, low inflation, and supportive corporate and financial conditions are expected to underpin growth. While merchandise exports may face challenges, services exports are likely to remain resilient, and ongoing reforms and trade negotiations could provide additional upside.

Is the state's Home Minister just a rubber stamp?: HDK

NEW DELHI

Union Minister H.D. Kumaraswamy strongly criticized the Karnataka government, questioning whether the state has only a "rubber stamp" Home Minister. Addressing the media in New Delhi, he asked how Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar had the authority to hold a meeting with police officials in Ballari. "Who gave him that power? Doesn't the state have a Home Minister?" he asked.

Kumaraswamy alleged that the government is trying to suppress the truth behind the Ballari clash incident. He said he has credible sources who have provided him with factual information, and after verifying it, he chose to speak publicly so people can know the reality.

Questioning the Deputy Chief Minister's intervention in Home Department affairs, he asked what role the Congress fact-finding committee truly has when complaints were already filed against those responsible within the Congress itself. He further alleged that the government is attempting to "bury" the entire case. "Will anyone open fire on the street just because of a banner issue? Why was the deceased Congress worker's body cremated immediately after the postmortem? The government must answer," he demanded.

He also targeted Minister Priyank Kharge, asking him to first explain what development he and his father contributed to their own constituency. Kumaraswamy added that even police officials believe that if the case is honestly investigated, many powerful people may be exposed.

Govt transfers DIG Vartika Katiyar, appoints new SP

BALLARI

- The Karnataka government on Wednesday transferred Ballari Range Deputy Inspector General of Police (DIG) Vartika Katiyar in the wake of recent clashes in Ballari that claimed one life. Dr P.S. Harsha, IPS, who was awaiting posting, has been appointed as the new Inspector General of Police (IGP), Ballari Range.
- The government has also named Suman D. Pennekar as the new Superintendent of Police (SP) of Ballari district. Pennekar replaces Pavan Nejjur, who was suspended following the incident.

I will stay in politics as long as people's blessings are with me: CM

HAVERI

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah stated that public support is essential for a political career, and it is due to the blessings of the people that he has come this far. "I will remain in politics as long as the people's blessings are with me. My governance has brought satisfaction," he said.

Speaking to the media today at the helipad of Kolli Polytechnic in Haveri, the CM highlighted the completion of Haveri Medical College, which cost around ₹500 crore. "I had announced the project and am inaugurating it myself. The third batch is already underway," he added.

Responding to BJP criticism claiming his government has left projects incomplete, Siddaramaiah asserted that the opposition is spreading falsehoods. On GST, he explained that the central government had imposed a 24% GST eight years ago, and the state later reduced its share. Karnataka now faces an annual loss of ₹5,000–6,000 crore, receiving only ₹60–70 thousand crore against ₹4.5 lakh crore due, while state projects like the Bhadra irrigation project (₹5,300 crore), the Peripheral Ring Road (₹3,000 crore), and Bangalore lake development (₹3,000 crore) remain underfunded.

He questioned why BJP, despite being in power for four years, could not complete the medical college. "We have taken charge and ensured its completion," he emphasized, underlining his government's commitment to fulfilling development promises and completing pending projects.

UNION BUDGET 2026 TO BE PRESENTED ON FEBRUARY 1

NEW DELHI: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman will present the Union Budget 2026-27 on Sunday, February 1, marking the first time in recent memory that the Budget will be presented on a Sunday. The Budget Session of Parliament will commence with the President's address on January 28, followed by the tabling of the Economic Survey on January 29. The first part of the session will run from January 28 to February 13, while the second part will take place between March 9 and April 2.This will be FM Sitharaman's ninth consecutive Union Budget and the 88th Budget since India's independence.

M'rashtra Civic Polls: BJP, Congress, NCP join hands to sideline Shiv Sena

THANE

In a surprising political twist, arch rivals BJP and Congress, along with Ajit Pawar-led NCP, have joined forces to keep Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena out of power in Ambernath Municipal Council (AMC) in Thane district. The move deals a major blow to Shinde Senior and Junior, who have long commanded the region's politics. Ambernath, part of the Kalyan Lok Sabha constituency represented by Dr Shrikant Shinde, has traditionally been a Shiv Sena stronghold. In the 59-ward AMC elections, Shiv Sena had won 23 seats, BJP 16, Congress 12, and NCP 4. BJP's Tejashree Karanjule was elected council president through a direct vote. By combining forces, BJP (16), Congress (12), and NCP (4) now hold 32 seats, comfortably outnumbering Shiv Sena. The alliance, named the Ambernath City Development Front, is being justified as a coalition for the city's "overall development."

SIR Phase 2: 6.5 cr names removed from draft rolls of 12 states, UTs

NEW DELHI

The names of 6.5 crore electors were removed from the draft electoral rolls of nine states and three Union territories published in the past days as part of the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) being carried out by the Election Commission. Before Phase 2 of the SIR, which commenced on October 27, the 12 states and UTs had 50.90 crore electors.

After the separate draft rolls were published, the number of electors dwindled to 44.40 crore. EC officials said the names of those removed from the draft rolls have been put in the 'ASD' or absent, shifted and dead/duplicate category.

Phase II of the SIR began in Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Puducherry, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh and West Bengal on November 4.

In Assam, a separate 'special revision' of electoral rolls is in progress. The last SIR in states will serve as the cut-off date, just as the 2003 voter list of Bihar was used by the ECI for intensive revision.Most states had the last SIR of the voter list between 2002 and 2004.

The primary aim of the SIR is to weed out foreign illegal migrants by checking their place of birth. The move assumes significance in the wake of a crackdown in various states on illegal migrants, including those from Bangladesh and Myanmar.

WHITEFIELD HORROR

Six-year-old girl abducted, murdered; body found in dry canal in Agrahara, Bengaluru

BENGALURU

A six-year-old girl was allegedly abducted and murdered in a migrant colony at Pattandur Agrahara in Whitefield, east Bengaluru, police said on Wednesday. The child belonged to a family of migrant labourers from West Bengal.

Her father, Injamul Sheikh, filed a complaint on January 6 after the girl went missing the previous afternoon. Sheikh suspected Yusuf Meer, another migrant worker from West Bengal living nearby, police said. Both families were engaged in daily wage work and rag-picking, sources added.

Authorities later discovered the girl's body in a dry canal close to the colony. A senior police officer said, "The suspect is at large and a search is on to trace him. Prima facie, it is suspected the juvenile was strangled to death. No evident signs of sexual assault were found. A post-mortem report is awaited."

The suspect is likely to face charges of kidnapping and murder once apprehended. Police are intensifying efforts to locate Meer and urged residents to provide any information that could assist in the investigation.

The community is reeling from the tragedy, highlighting safety concerns in the area's migrant settlements. Authorities have promised strict action and continuous monitoring to prevent such incidents in the future.

This case comes amid growing awareness of child safety issues in Bengaluru, prompting calls for tighter security and vigilance in vulnerable neighbourhoods.

BJP accuses Hubballi police of disrobing woman

HUBBALLI

A viral video showing a woman partially undressed inside a police van in Hubballi has triggered a political confrontation between BJP and Congress leaders. The incident, related to events on January 5, escalated after BJP leaders accused the police of forcibly stripping BJP worker Sujata Handi and assaulting her while detaining her.

The detention followed tensions in Chalukya Nagar after allegations by resident Shivani Prashanth Bommaji and Congress corporator Suvarna Kallakuntla that BJP workers had accompanied a Booth Level Officer (BLO) during voter family mapping on January 2 and assaulted residents who questioned them. Police later detained Sujata and others.

BJP leaders claimed Sujata was only guiding the BLO and that Congress leaders influenced police action. BJP MLA Mahesh Tenginakai accused the police of inhumane treatment and demanded suspension of those responsible.

Police Chief, Women Commission says woman undressed herself

Hubballi-Dharwad Police Commissioner N Shashi Kumar denied BJP's allegations, stating that Sujata undressed herself inside the vehicle, attempted to assault police personnel—including women officers—and tried to escape. Nagalakshmi Choudhary, Chairperson of the Women's Commission, also said that the woman had undressed herself after the arrest. She clarified that the viral video was recorded by the woman herself.

QUICK READ

Woman Strangled to Death by Husband in Nelamangala Village

Bengaluru

A 24-year-old woman was allegedly strangled to death by her husband at Hunseghattepalya village in Nelamangala taluk, police said on Wednesday. The victim, Archana, a native of Kanakapura, was reportedly killed after her husband Anand tied a cable wire around her neck following a quarrel. The couple had recently come to Hunseghattepalya to work on a farm owned by Saradamma. After committing the crime, Anand allegedly attempted to flee and tried to mislead authorities by portraying the incident as a case of suicide. However, the Nelamangala rural police traced him and took him into custody. A case has been registered at the Nelamangala Rural police station, and further investigation is underway to ascertain the exact circumstances leading to the murder.

Bomb Threat Email Sent to B'luru College over Tamil Nadu Issue

Bengaluru

A private college in the city received a bomb threat email early on Wednesday, prompting heightened security and a thorough search of the premises. Dayanand Sagar Dental College received the email around 3.30 am, warning that a bomb would be detonated by noon. The email, reportedly sent to the 'Naindas Committee' in Tamil Nadu, cited dissatisfaction over the handling of police-related issues in the neighbouring State and alleged mismanagement of the committee. Following the alert, police, bomb disposal and dog squads rushed to the campus and conducted extensive checks. The KS Layout police later confirmed that no suspicious objects were found.

From 20 to 2 minutes, Hebbal flyover finally lets citizens breathe

After years of chaos, smoother traffic flow brings relief to daily commuters

BENGALURU

For years, the Hebbal flyover symbolised Bengaluru's traffic woes, testing the patience of thousands of motorists every single day. Commuters approaching from the Byatarayanapura–Kodigehalli–Esteem Mall side would routinely spend anywhere between 20 and 30 minutes inching forward in bumper-to-bumper traffic, often praying for a brief intervention by traffic police to ease the congestion. Today, that frustrating routine has largely become a thing of the past.

With the introduction of two new traffic loops, the commute across the Hebbal flyover has transformed dramatically. What was once one of the city's most dreaded choke points can now be crossed in just two to three minutes during non-peak hours, offering long-awaited relief to daily road users.

"A few months ago, our car would just crawl. We used to hope the traffic cop would stop vehicles coming from the airport side and let us pass," said Roshni Ram, a marketing executive who uses the flyover regularly. "Now the situation has completely changed. The flyover is no longer a 'Hebbal headache'."

However, while the flyover itself flows freely, commuters say fresh bottlenecks have emerged beyond it. Many point to congestion at Ganganagar and Mekhri Circle as areas that now need urgent attention.

Sumit Jain, a public relations professional living in Hebbal, noted that traffic slows down again near Baptist Hospital towards Mekhri Circle. "At the loop's exit, a BMTC bus stop disrupts the flow, and vehicles cutting across to the service road make it worse. The time saved on the flyover is lost immediately after. Still, outside peak hours, the improvement is undeniable," he said.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (Traffic–North) Jayaprakash explained that before the loops opened, 15 to 20 personnel were deployed on and around the flyover to manage traffic. "Earlier, gating created bottlenecks and slowed vehicle movement. Now, vehicles from the airport, Kodigehalli–Esteem Mall service road and KR Puram move in separate lanes without interference," he said.

With traffic flowing smoothly, only a handful of traffic police personnel are now required at the spot, marking a significant operational and commuter-friendly improvement.

IT complaint against Minister Zameer over ₹25 lakh cash aid

BENGALURU

Hindu leader alleges violation of RBI norms, seeks probe into source of funds

A complaint has been filed with the Income Tax Department against District Incharge Minister Zameer Ahmed Khan for allegedly distributing ₹25 lakh in cash as compensation to the family of Congress worker Rajashekar, who was killed in a shooting incident in Ballari following a dispute over a banner.

The complaint was lodged by Hindu leader Tejas Gowda, who has questioned both the legality and the source of the cash payment. Rajashekar, a Congress worker, was shot dead during a clash linked to the erection of a political banner, triggering widespread outrage and demands for justice.

In his complaint, Gowda stated that, as per Reserve Bank of India (RBI) guidelines, it is illegal to keep or transact more than ₹2 lakh in cash without proper documentation. Any compensation exceeding this amount, he said, should be routed through legitimate banking channels such as RTGS, NEFT or other digital transactions. He has urged the Income Tax Department to investigate how a sitting minister could distribute such a large sum in hard cash and whether the money was accounted for.

Speaking to the media, Gowda said that while the loss suffered by Rajashekar's family was irreparable, the method adopted to provide compensation raised serious questions. "An innocent activist was killed in a firing incident. The minister handed over ₹25 lakh in hard cash. This is a clear violation of RBI norms. Not just ₹25 lakh, even ₹25 crore would not bring back the son the family lost, but the way the money was given is suspicious," he alleged.

He further questioned whether the cash was white or black money, and whether it had been declared. "If more than ₹2 lakh is to be given, it must be done through banking channels. If ₹25 lakh was paid in cash, what is the source of that money? If it is unaccounted, it amounts to a violation of Section 69 of the Income Tax Act," Gowda said, adding that he had demanded a detailed probe into the transaction.

Gowda also said that Rajashekar was the sole breadwinner of his family and that the government could consider providing a job to a family member. "We are not opposing compensation. But a minister must follow the law. There cannot be one rule for the powerful and another for the poor. By violating RBI orders, what message is he sending to society?" he asked.

The Minister has not yet responded to the allegations.

UCO Bank's Zonal Office Celebrates 84th Foundation Day

BENGALURU

UCO Bank's Bengaluru Zonal Office celebrated its 84th Foundation Day with a series of community-focused initiatives and cultural programmes on Wednesday.

As part of its Corporate Social Responsibility, the bank conducted eye and health check-up camps, blood donation drives, and a plantation campaign across Karnataka, demonstrating its commitment to environmental sustainability and public welfare.

The celebrations included cultural performances in the presence of Rajesh Kumar, Deputy General Manager and Zonal Head, Bengaluru Zone. S Chandrasekharan, former Executive Director of UCO Bank, graced the event as the Chief Guest. In a statement, the bank reaffirmed its dedication to community development and customer-centric banking, emphasizing its role not only as a financial institution but also as a socially responsible organization committed to the welfare of society.

It's Employer's Duty to Ensure Driver Has Valid Licence: HC

BENGALURU

The High Court has reiterated that employers are responsible for verifying the credentials of their drivers and that failure to ensure a valid driving licence amounts to a breach of insurance policy conditions, absolving insurers of liability.

Justice K. Manmadha Rao upheld an order of the Commissioner for Employees' Compensation, Mangaluru, directing Balmy English Medium School, Thenkulipady, to pay compensation to the family of a bus driver who died in an accident in August 2008.

The bus skidded on a rain-soaked road and plunged into the Phalguni River, leaving driver Badruddin fatally injured.

Bajaj Allianz General Insurance Company denied liability, citing that the driver's licence had expired prior to the accident. The Commissioner awarded ₹5.4 lakh with 12% interest, holding the school liable.

Largest Uniform Expo in the Country at Palace Grounds: Unveiling Over Ten Thousand Designs

BENGALURU

For the first time in Bengaluru, the country's largest one-day uniform exhibition was organized at the Ananthya Convention Hall at the Palace Grounds. More than 10,000 designs were showcased on a single platform. The grandeur of uniforms was unveiled through a collaboration between Valji Uniforms and Birla Cellulose's Spunshades. This was the largest exhibition of its kind ever presented in Bengaluru.

The exhibition, highlighting innovation and diversity in uniforms, was inaugurated by Member of Parliament P.C. Mohan and former Police Commissioner Bhaskar Rao. Speaking on the occasion, they said this event marks a significant milestone in the textile and uniform industry. This unprecedented exhibition brings together innovation and design excellence and sets a new benchmark for the uniform segment. They also noted that "Darshan Valji" is one of the country's leading uniform fabric manufacturing brands and a prominent name in both the uniform and corporate apparel sectors.

Prakash Pirgal, President, The Bangalore Wholesale Cloth Merchant Association, Valji Fabrics Managing Director Kishore Kothari, Valji Uniforms M.D. Tejas Kothari, Valji Chennel Partner, Champalal and Company, Owner Abhayraj Luniya

The uniform market is valued at several thousand crores of rupees and is witnessing an annual growth rate of around 15 percent. With the expansion of education and the increase in the number of schools, the demand for uniform fabrics continues to rise steadily. By adopting the latest technology and ensuring timely supply of high-quality fabrics, Valji has consistently maintained its leadership position in this sector.

Valji Uniforms produces wrinkle-free fabrics using state-of-the-art looms, available in polyester-cotton and polyester-viscose blends. These fabrics offer a soft texture, skin-friendly comfort, color-lock technology, sun protection, and a wide range of colors. This ensures superior comfort and a smart look for schoolchildren, making it easier for customers to choose uniforms of their preference. In addition, Valji has the capability to provide customized designs based on customer requirements.

Valji believes that children are the future of the nation and will shoulder the responsibility of the country. With this vision, Valji provides children with comfortable uniforms that offer a premium feel and a smart look—today, tomorrow, and forever—while preserving the enthusiasm and pride associated with wearing school uniforms.

Achievement Is Not an Impossible Task for Women: Minister Lakshmi Hebbalkar

BENGALURU

Women and Child Development Minister Lakshmi Hebbalkar on Wednesday said that while the path to success may be difficult for women, achievement is never impossible if they are determined and confident.

Speaking after inaugurating the Shakti Samvad–2026 programme organised by Vijaya Karnataka Digital at Mount Carmel College, the Minister shared her personal journey to inspire young women. "I come from a rural background, and the path I chose was not easy. This is not just my story; every woman here has her own struggles and victories," she said.

Recalling the societal limitations women faced in the past, Hebbalkar said women were once confined to household responsibilities such as cooking and raising children. "Times have changed. By stepping beyond the past, we have transformed ourselves. Women are not just participants in society; we are its creators," she asserted.

The Minister noted that women today are no longer forced to seek opportunities, as they have created an environment where opportunities seek them. "Women are excelling in education and are far ahead in many fields," she said, adding that unity and awareness among women have grown significantly.

Referring to social reforms, Hebbalkar pointed out that there was a time when widowed women had no right to live with dignity. "Today, much has changed. If women decide, they can even determine who forms the government through their votes," she said, highlighting the political and social empowerment of women.

She also outlined various welfare schemes introduced by the State government for women. The Shakti Yojana, she said, has benefited women across sectors, from IT-BT professionals to those in rural areas. Under the Grihalakshmi Yojana, the government has so far provided ₹48,000 each to 1.26 crore women. "While the scheme may not completely transform lives, it has certainly provided meaningful support," she said.

Film producer Geetha Shivarajkumar, BMTF ADGP D. Roopa Moudgil, actor Shwetha Srivatsava, Mount Carmel College Director and Secretary Sister M. Aldina, Principal Prof. George Lekha, Vijaya Karnataka Digital Editor Prasad Naika, faculty members and hundreds of students were present at the event.

HONOUR FOR ACHIEVEMENT

KSRTC Employees' Children Honoured for Academic Excellence

BENGALURU

Children of employees of the Karnataka State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) who excelled in higher education and won gold medals were felicitated by Minister for Transport and Muzrai Ramalinga Reddy on Wednesday. The programme celebrated academic excellence and recognised the perseverance of students who achieved distinction despite challenges faced by their families.

A total of six students were honoured at the event. Each student received a cash award of ₹5,000 from the Corporation along with a certificate of appreciation. In addition, Mr. Reddy personally presented ₹20,000 each to all six achievers as a special encouragement for their academic accomplishments.

The awardees included Dr. M. Gagana, MBBS, daughter of K.E. Munirajappa from the Regional Workshop, Kengeri, who secured high marks and won a gold medal; T.R. Vismaya, M.Tech, daughter of T.K. Renukarya, Driver-cum-Conductor, Puttur Division, who also secured high marks and a gold medal; and K.M. Rufiyaa, M.Sc, daughter of H. Mahaboob Saab, Traffic Controller, Chikkaballapur Division, who won an impressive seven gold medals.

Others felicitated were Satish Kumar Doddmani, Master of Performing Arts (Drama), son of Paddavva Gani, Driver-cum-Conductress, Bengaluru Central Division, 6th Depot, who won a gold medal; Dr. B.B. Saniya, Bachelor of Dental Surgery, daughter of Akram Pasha, Driver-cum-Conductor, Mysuru City Division, Nanjangud Depot, who secured seven gold medals and two silver medals; and T. Harmeen, B.Sc, daughter of Tayab Ahmed, Conductor, Mysuru Rural Division, who won six gold medals.

Addressing the students, Mr. Reddy said that in today's competitive era, hard work, discipline and self-confidence were the key mantras for success. He urged them to fully utilise their talent and potential and strive for excellence in their chosen fields, whether science, technology, arts, sports or any other domain.

The Minister observed that KSRTC's driving and technical staff work tirelessly in public service, often spending long hours away from their families. "Despite these challenges, it is heartening to see their children understanding their parents' sacrifices and bringing honour to them through academic excellence," he said, congratulating the parents for their unwavering support.

Mr. Reddy also called upon the students to use their knowledge for the betterment of society and the nation. Highlighting the Sarige Vidya Chetana Scheme, he said that 5,450 students had so far received scholarships totalling ₹2.76 crore under the initiative.

VS Aradhya, Chairman, BMTC; Mohammed Rizwan Nawab, Vice Chairman, KSRTC; Akram Pasha, Managing Director, KSRTC; Dr. K. Nandini Devi, Director (Personnel and Vigilance), and other senior officers were present.

Pyrotechnician 'Molested' at Pub on New Year's Eve, Management Accused of Mishandling

BENGALURU

A 36-year-old pyrotechnician has accused a customer of molesting her during a performance at a pub on Old Airport Road near Indiranagar on New Year's Eve, and alleged that the pub staff mishandled the incident. The incident reportedly occurred around 10.15 pm on the second floor of the pub. The performer alleged that a man, identified as Nagaraju, smacked her as she was walking towards the stage. Her friend confronted and slapped him, while the performer also struck him and tried to restrain him with her dragon staff. She claimed the bouncers and management responded late, allowing the man to initially escape.

The suspect was later taken to Jeevan Bhima Nagar police station, where a complaint was filed. The woman said the pub has not paid them and sought a formal apology. The pub management claimed CCTV footage suggests the contact was accidental and said police were informed promptly.

Taluk Development Board Member to 'Mukhya Mantri'- a 48-year-long political journey

Tracing Siddaramaiah's political journey, this piece shows how a committed socialist reshaped Karnataka's electoral history, challenged entrenched power, and redefined governance through resilience, strategy, and mass connect with enduring appeal.

When Siddaramaiah crossed the historic milestone of becoming Karnataka's longest-serving Chief Minister, surpassing the record set by the legendary late D. Devaraja Urs, it was more than a personal achievement. It was a moment that encapsulated decades of ideological battles, political reinvention, grassroots struggles and an unyielding commitment to social justice. Unlike many leaders who inherit political legacies, Siddaramaiah's journey has been one carved out of adversity. Born in a modest Kuruba family at Siddaramaiyanahundi village Mysuru taluk of Mysuru district, his rise from village politics to the pinnacle of state power is a story deeply rooted in the soil of Karnataka's social movements.

Siddaramaiah's political consciousness was shaped not in corridors of power but in the classrooms and agitations inspired by the Lohia–JP socialist tradition. Trained as a lawyer, he entered politics through the student movement, absorbing the values of equality, secularism and redistribution of power. His early association with leaders like Prof M.D.Nanjundaswamy and the Ram Manohar Lohia school of thought laid the foundation for a politics that consistently spoke for the marginalised—Dalits, backward classes, minorities and the poor. This ideological grounding would later become his defining political identity. Few leaders in Karnataka politics have survived as many ideological and party transitions as Siddaramaiah. From the Janata Party to the Janata Dal, from Janata Dal (Secular) to the Indian National Congress, his political evolution mirrors the churn of Karnataka's coalition era. Critics often questioned his party shifts, but supporters saw a leader adapting to political realities without abandoning his core beliefs.

Each transition sharpened his political instincts, teaching him the art of survival in a fractured mandate era. His break with H.D. Deve Gowda and eventual move to the Congress was a turning point. He launched a party, All India Progressive Janata Dal (AIPJD) with a fond hope of building a strong alternative to two national parties but he gave up after seeing the bleak future of some of the regional parties floated by other political leaders of Karnataka.

So, he jumped to the Congress, where he found a national platform and the organisational backing to translate his ideas into governance.

When Siddaramaiah became Chief Minister in 2013, he was not merely another Congress leader occupying the chair. He arrived with a clear agenda—restore the state's secular fabric, strengthen welfare governance and reclaim the Congress's social justice plank. Schemes like Anna Bhagya, Ksheera Bhagya, Indira Canteen, Shaadi Bhagya and Krishi Bhagya were not just welfare programmes; they were political statements. They redefined the Congress's connection with the poor and helped Siddaramaiah earn the title of "Ahinda leader"—a champion of minorities, backward classes and Dalits.

His tenure was marked by fiscal discipline combined with welfare expansion, earning praise even from political opponents. Karnataka's economy remained stable while social spending increased—a balance few governments manage.

Comparisons with D. Devaraja Urs are inevitable. Urs dismantled feudal power structures and empowered backward classes through land reforms and reservations. Siddaramaiah, walking the same path decades later, expanded that legacy through modern welfare economics and identity-based inclusion. Breaking Urs's record is symbolically powerful. Urs ruled in an era of Congress dominance; Siddaramaiah achieved longevity in an era of fractured mandates, coalition compulsions, aggressive opposition politics and media scrutiny.

The contrast makes Siddaramaiah's record even more significant

The 2018 Setback and Political Resurrection

Politics, however, tested Siddaramaiah harshly in 2018. The Congress lost power, and he personally lost from the Chamundeshwari Assembly Constituency but the voters of Badami elected him. This came as a big helping hand for him to remain in the State politics despite being defeated in his home turf. Many wrote him off, branding him yesterday's leader in a rapidly changing political landscape. But Siddaramaiah has always been a fighter. As Leader of the Opposition, he reinvented himself yet again—sharper, more aggressive and unapologetically ideological. He took on the BJP government head-on, raising issues of price rise, corruption, federalism and constitutional values.

The 2023 Assembly elections marked one of the most dramatic comebacks in Karnataka politics. Siddaramaiah led the Congress to a decisive victory, proving that mass politics still mattered in an age of high-decibel campaigns.

Second Innings: Authority with Experience

Returning as Chief Minister, Siddaramaiah emerged more confident, more decisive and politically astute. The five guarantee schemes announced by the Congress became the backbone of his governance narrative, reinforcing his pro-poor image.

This phase of leadership reflects maturity—balancing governance with coalition management, ideology with pragmatism, and welfare with economic caution.

Surpassing Devaraja Urs's record is not merely about days in office. It is about endurance. Siddaramaiah has endured ideological wars, party betrayals, electoral defeats, caste politics and shifting voter aspirations.

In doing so, he has etched his name into Karnataka's political history as a leader who did not fade away but adapted, fought back and prevailed.

A Polarising Yet Indispensable Leader

Siddaramaiah remains a polarising figure. To supporters, he is the voice of the oppressed and a bulwark against communal politics. To critics, he is confrontational and uncompromising.

But even detractors concede one truth: Siddaramaiah has redefined the political centre of gravity in Karnataka. Welfare politics, social justice discourse and secularism are once again central to the state's political debate—largely because of him.

As Siddaramaiah continues his tenure, the question is no longer whether he has broken a record—but what legacy he will leave behind. Like Devaraja Urs before him, his true measure will be judged not by longevity alone but by how deeply his policies reshape Karnataka's For now, history stands witness: a socialist from the grassroots has walked past giants, rewritten records and claimed his place among Karnataka's most consequential leaders.

Siddaramaiah's journey is proof that in politics, resilience can be more powerful than inheritance—and ideology, when sustained, can outlast time.

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah's political journey is a notable arc from his beginnings in the Janata Parivar to becoming the longest-serving Chief Minister in Karnataka's history as of January 2026. His career is defined by his commitment to social justice, his focus on the AHINDA coalition (minorities, backward classes, and Dalits), and his record 16 state budget presentations.

Records & Recognition

As of early 2026, Siddaramaiah is on track becoming Karnataka's longest-serving Chief Minister, surpassing the tenure of the reformist D. Devaraj Urs — a rare achievement in the state's politics.

He has presented a record number of state budgets (16+), underscoring both experience and influence in fiscal governance.

Rise in State Politics (1980s–2000s)

HELD KEY MINISTERIAL PORTFOLIOS IN JANATA DAL GOVERNMENTS, INCLUDING:

- **Transport**
- **Animal Husbandry**
- **Sericulture**
- **He later became Finance Minister as well.**
- **Served as Deputy Chief Minister of Karnataka twice (1996 and 2004).**
- **Was Secretary–General of Janata Dal in 1992 before joining the Congress party in 2006**

Siddaramaiah and AHINDA Coalition

After joining Indian National Congress (2006), he cultivated support among:

Alpasankhyataru (Minorities)

Hindulidavaru (Backward Classes)

Dalitaru (Dalits)

This coalition is popularly known as AHINDA.

Notable for being the first CM in ~40 years in Karnataka to complete a full 5-year term.

Introduced major welfare schemes for the underprivileged:

ANNA BHAGYA
subsidised food grains

KSHEERA BHAGYA
free milk for children

POLITICAL JOURNEY TIMELINE

- **Early Career (Late 1970s - Early 1980s):** Siddaramaiah began his public life as a lawyer and became a member of the Taluk Development Board in 1978. His entry into electoral politics was with the Lok Sabha elections in 1980, which he lost.
- **Legislative Debut (1983):** He won his first Assembly election from the Chamundeshwari constituency on a Lok Dal ticket. He later joined the ruling Janata Party.
- **Ministerial Roles (Mid-1990s - Mid-2000s):** He served as the Deputy Chief Minister of Karnataka twice, from 1996 to 1999 and again from 2004 to 2005, while associated with the Janata Dal and Janata Dal (Secular). He also held the position of Finance Minister during this period.
- **Joining Congress (2006):** Following his expulsion from the JD(S), Siddaramaiah joined the Indian National Congress party. He resigned his assembly seat and won the subsequent by-election from the same constituency on a Congress ticket.
- **Leader of Opposition & First CM Term (2008 - 2018):** He was elected to the newly formed Varuna constituency in 2008 and became the Leader of the Opposition. Following the Congress victory in the 2013 elections, he was sworn in as Chief Minister for his first term, which lasted a full five years (May 13, 2013, to May 15, 2018).
- **Interim Period (2018 - 2023):** He lost the 2018 election in Chamundeshwari but won in Badami. He later became the Leader of the Opposition in the assembly once again.
- **Second Term as CM (2023 - Present):** In the 2023 assembly elections, Congress secured a decisive majority, and Siddaramaiah was sworn in as Chief Minister for the second time on May 20, 2023.
- **Milestone (January 2026):** In January 2026, Siddaramaiah surpassed the record of his political mentor Devaraj Urs to become Karnataka's longest-serving Chief Minister by total days in office across his two non-consecutive terms.

QUICK READ

Father forces minor daughter into prostitution for money

CHIKKAMAGALURU

In a shocking and heart-breaking incident in Karnataka's Chikkamagaluru district, a father named Girish, along with the victim's grandmother Nagarathna, allegedly forced their 16-year-old minor daughter/granddaughter into prostitution for money. After the girl's mother died six years ago, the duo reportedly collaborated with broker Narayanaswamy to traffic her to Mangaluru, where she was taken to Bharat Shetty's house. There, with the father's involvement, she was subjected to sexual assault by 8-10 men over six days, even during her menstrual period. When she resisted, she was told money had been paid. The victim confided in relatives, leading to a police complaint at Beeruru station.

Training held on TReDS and environmental–social management

MANDYA

Under the RAMP scheme, the Department of Industries and Commerce organised a training programme on January 7, 2026, focusing on TReDS (Trade Receivables Discounting System) and Environment and Social Management (ESM) at the PES Engineering College auditorium in Mandya. The programme was inaugurated by Joint Director of the District Industries Centre, T. Dinesh, who said many MSME units face working capital challenges, and using online TReDS platforms can help resolve liquidity issues through timely receivable discounting. He also stressed that units must be aware of laws and responsibilities related to social and environmental management to ensure sustainable operations.

Mandya to celebrate National Youth Day on Jan 12

MANDYA

The Department of Youth Empowerment and Sports, in association with My Bharat Kendra and Mandya University, will celebrate National Youth Day on January 12, 2026, marking the 163rd birth anniversary of Swami Vivekananda. The programme will begin at 10:00 am at the Mandya University auditorium. A painting competition on Swami Vivekananda will also be organised at 1:00 pm at the My Bharat Kendra office (near Hindi Bhavan). Youth from Mandya district aged between 15 and 29 years are encouraged to participate in large numbers. Cash prizes of ₹3,000, ₹2,000 and ₹1,000 will be awarded to the first, second and third winners respectively.

Ballari clash: Sriramulu demands immediate arrest of Bharat Reddy

Former minister Sriramulu accused Congress MLA Bharat Reddy and Satish Reddy of instigating Ballari clash, demanding immediate arrests

BALLARI

Former minister B. Sriramulu has strongly demanded the immediate arrest of Congress MLA Bharat Reddy and Satish Reddy, alleging that they were responsible for the recent clash outside Janardhana Reddy's residence in Ballari. Speaking to the media in the district, Sriramulu claimed that Bharat Reddy provoked violence and even instructed his gunman to fire shots

during the incident. He accused the MLA of repeatedly issuing incendiary statements, including threats to "burn Ballari," yet no serious action has been taken against him.

Sriramulu questioned why the main accused, Satish Reddy, has not been arrested and alleged that he is being sheltered in Bengaluru with state-level support. He criticised the government, saying authorities were hesitant to arrest Bharat Reddy fearing political backlash and damage to the ruling administration's image.

He further highlighted that common people and even BJP workers are swiftly arrested for minor offences, such as filming reels with weapons or protesting against the Home Minister, often facing serious charges. However, despite clear involvement in the Ballari unrest, key accused individuals have allegedly been spared.

Sriramulu demanded the immediate arrest of MLA Bharat Reddy, his associates, and all gunmen involved. He also alleged that instead of targeting those responsible for the violence, officials have issued notices to BJP supporters, with 33 individuals reportedly receiving legal summons under Section 107 through the Tahsildar. Expressing strong dissatisfaction, he accused authorities of selectively targeting BJP workers while ignoring those who actually instigated the clash, calling the situation deeply unjust and politically motivated.

Meaningful celebration planned for Siddarameshwara Jayanti

CHITRADURGA

Preparations are underway to celebrate Sri Shivayogi Siddarameshwara Jayanti in a meaningful and well-organised manner on January 14, said in-charge Assistant Commissioner N. Venkatesh Naik. He was speaking while presiding over the preliminary meeting held at the Deputy Commissioner's office hall to review arrangements for the event.

He instructed officials to ensure that the celebrations are conducted smoothly, peacefully, and with proper planning. Adequate security should be in place for both the procession and stage programmes, he said. Traffic management must be handled carefully so that the procession does not inconvenience the public. Invitations must be printed as per protocol and extended to public representatives. The main Jayanti programme will be held at the Deputy Commissioner's office auditorium, where Siddarameshwara's portrait will be

Chitradurga plans meaningful Siddarameshwara Jayanti on Jan 14, with procession security, traffic control, floral tributes, lecture, music, and coordinated arrangements across departments.

placed on the stage for dignitaries to offer floral tributes. All departments must work in coordination to avoid any disruptions, Naik emphasised.

During the Jayanti, Prof. Basavaraj T. Belgatta from Vani Sakkare Government First Grade College, Hiriyur, will deliver a special lecture on the life, achievements, and teachings of Sri Shivayogi Siddarameshwara. A devotional singing programme will also form part of the celebrations, informed Assistant Director of the Kannada and Culture Department, B.M. Gurunath.

Additional Superintendent of Police Shivakumar, Tahsildar Govindaraju, and community leaders Tippeswamy, Lakshman, Geetha Govindaraju, Manjunath, D.C. Mohan and several district-level officials were present at the meeting.

Kantiraj named Mandya Madiga Mahasabha president

MANDYA

The Karnataka Madiga Mahasabha has constituted its Mandya district committee, with State President and Minister K.H. Muniyappa officially issuing the appointment order. The decision follows a recent full-members meeting held in Mandya under the leadership of State Executive Committee member N.R. Chandrashekar, where various office-bearers were selected for key positions. B.N. Kantiraj from BB Kaval village in KR Pet taluk has been appointed as the Mandya district president. Advocate Jayaram from Hunaganahalli Colony will serve as Vice President, while Chamanahalli Manju has been named General Secretary. Jayanti from Allapattana village has been appointed Treasurer. The newly formed executive committee includes H.M. Puttaraju of Hoshaholalu, Kumar of Balehonnur, Jagadish of Haniyambadi, Govindayya of Alpahalli, and Krishnayya of Ijwalaghatta. Special invitees include former Zilla Panchayat President R.K. Kumar, Mandya District Madiga Contractors' Association President C.K. Papayya, industrialist Kuchela, community leader B. Krishna of Gandhinagar, Bellale Javarayi, and advocate Kannali C. Kempayya. The Karnataka Madiga Mahasabha was established in 2015 with the objective of empowering the Madiga community and ensuring holistic development. It works towards educational, social, economic and cultural progress.

DC pays surprise visit to Maddur taluk office

MANDYA

Mandya Deputy Commissioner paid a surprise visit to the Maddur Taluk Office on January 7 and conducted a detailed review of its functioning. During the inspection, the DC examined various branches, reviewed office administration, file disposal progress, implementation of public services, and verified staff attendance records.

Interacting directly with citizens present at the office, the Deputy Commissioner listened to their grievances and assured prompt resolution. The Tahsildar was instructed to address each complaint seriously and ensure solutions within stipulated deadlines. The DC also reviewed the status of pending files under the e-Office system and directed officials to clear them within the prescribed time, stressing effective use of digital governance.To prevent unnecessary delays and hardships to the public, the DC issued strict instructions to deliver essential citizen services— including caste and income certificates, landholding certificates, domicile certificates, and family tree records — within the fixed timelines under the Sakala scheme. Any negligence or delay would result in disciplinary action, the DC warned.The record and archive sections were also inspected, with directions to collect prescribed government fees transparently and deposit them promptly. Officials were asked to ensure proper documentation, safekeeping of records, and to give priority to digitization and systematic storage.

The DC instructed all Hobli-level staff to remain available at their respective headquarters and respond promptly to public issues. Emphasis was placed on punctuality, workplace discipline, cleanliness, ID card usage, and courteous behavior with citizens.

The progress of major government initiatives including Aadhaar seeding, e-Pahani records.

'Civic workers key to keeping society clean'

KOPPAL

Civic workers play a vital role in keeping society healthy and clean, said P. Raghu, Chairman of the Karnataka State Safai Karmacharis Commission. Speaking at a live interaction program with sanitation workers on Wednesday, he emphasized that without the work of safai karmacharis and civic staff, maintaining cleanliness in urban and rural areas would be impossible.

The program was held at the Auditorium Hall of the Koppal District Administration Building in collaboration with the District Administration, Zilla Panchayat, Social Welfare Department, and District Urban Development Cell. Raghu said that civic workers are the guardians of cleanliness and their work directly contributes to public health. He called for proper respect for these workers and assured that the commission is committed to improving their socio-economic conditions.

He added that sanitation

workers should receive health insurance, regular check-ups, safety equipment like masks, gloves, shoes, and uniforms, and access to clean hand-washing facilities. Education support for their children should also be provided. "They are humans like us and deserve dignity," he stressed.

During the program, workers from Gangavathi bus station spoke about challenges, including delayed meals, lack of safety gear, and unpaid minimum wages. Municipal staff highlighted that although they receive basic facilities, many have served for over 25 years and requested permanent employment.

In response, Raghu directed KKRTC officials to ensure cleaning staff at bus stands are paid minimum wages according to labor rules. He also instructed the Municipal Commissioner to prioritize permanent jobs for long-serving municipal workers.

As part of the event, incentive grant letters were symbolically given to 17 municipal workers under the Griha Bhagya Yojana to support home construction, including 14 from Gangavathi and 3 from Karatagi.

The program was attended by Koppal District Magistrate Dr. Suresh B. Itnal, Project Director Manjunath Gundur, officials from various departments, civic workers, and local urban body representatives, making it a meaningful platform to honor and support sanitation staff.

Public training on e-auction process for excise licenses

CHITRADURGA

The Department of Excise has launched the e-auction process for 569 unallocated and pending liquor licenses across the state. The licenses will be allocated transparently through an online auction, which will be conducted from January 13 to 20, allowing participants to bid from anywhere in the state. B. Madesh, Joint Commissioner of Excise, Hosanagara Division, inaugurated a public training workshop at the District Panchayat Hall on Wednesday, explaining the procedure. The e-auction will be held on the MSTC Ltd. portal, and interested participants must register online by paying a registration fee of ₹1,000 per registration. A single application can cover multiple licenses, but each application requires a separate ₹50,000 application fee, which is non-refundable. Additionally, a 2% EMD of the base price for each license must be paid along with the application.

In Chitradurga district, 12 CL-2A licenses (retail liquor sale) are available for bidding across taluks including Chitradurga, Holalkere, Challakere, Hiriyur, and Molakalmuru. The state government has introduced two types of licenses under this e-auction: CL-2A (retail liquor) and CL-9A (refreshment rooms or bars).

Dr. Ashalatha, Deputy Excise Commissioner, highlighted that the e-auction aims to increase state revenue and ensure transparency. Technical guidance was provided by MSTC officials Satish Kumar and Ravikumar during the training. Excise officials including Surendrachaar, Rajendra Hugar, and D.G. Kiran, along with members of the public, participated in the workshop to understand the process and requirements for successful participation.

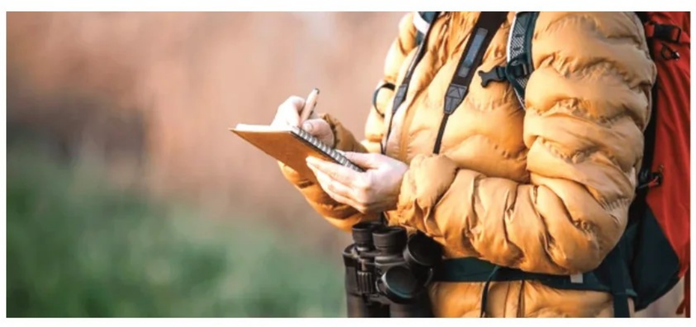
The Excise Department has launched an online auction for 569 pending liquor licences statewide from January 13–20. Bidding will be conducted via the MSTC portal. In Chitradurga district, 12 CL-2A retail liquor licences across five taluks are available, aiming to boost revenue and ensure transparency.

HAKKI HABBA

M'luru to host 12th 'Hakki Habba' from January 9 to 11

MANGALURU

Mangaluru will host the 12th edition of the 'Hakki Habba' (Bird Festival) from January 9 to 11, organised by the Karnataka Eco-Tourism Development Board in collaboration with the Forest Department. Addressing the media at the Mangaluru Press Club, Board Chairperson Shalette Pinto said the festival aims to create awareness among youth about diverse bird species, many of which are facing the threat of extinction. The last bird festival in Mangaluru was held in 2018 when Ramanath Rai was



Forest Minister. This year's festival will be inaugurated at the Scouts and Guides Bhavan in Pilikula, with Speaker U.T. Khader, Forest Minister Eshwar Khandre, district incharge minister Dinesh Gundu Rao and other dignitaries set to attend. The official mascot of the festival will be the White-Bellied Sea Eagle, commonly seen along the coastal belt.

Deputy Conservator of Forests Anthony S. Mariappa said the festival will serve as a platform for bird lovers to share knowledge and experience. Around 180 students from four city colleges will participate, and overall participation is expected to reach nearly 250, including bird experts. Twelve bird-watching trails across different ecosystems have been identified, with four viewing sessions scheduled daily. Participants will be divided into 10 teams to cover all trails, followed by expert interactions after each session. Dakshina Kannada district currently records around 420 bird species, including 40 migratory birds.

Alongside, awareness activities on human–wildlife conflict are also being conducted, Pinto added. Schools are being educated on snakebite prevention, snake conservation and safety measures. She expressed her intention to revitalise the Eco-Tourism Board and bring trekking routes currently under the Forest Department back under its administration. Of the state's 40 trekking paths, six are located in Dakshina Kannada, she noted.

Authorities promote millets for better nutrition in Ch'ballapura

CHIKKABALLAPUR

Emphasizing the nutritional benefits of millets, Deputy District Commissioner Dr. Bhaskar highlighted that incorporating these grains into daily diets ensures better health and balanced nutrition. Addressing a public awareness program organized by the District Administration, Zilla Panchayat, and Agriculture Department at Chikkaballapur, he explained the importance of regular millet consumption for overall wellness.

The initiative aimed to educate citizens on different millet varieties, their cultivation, and their dietary advantages. Demonstrations showcased how millets can be used in everyday meals, including traditional preparations of ragi, jowar, bajra, and other local grains. Experts encouraged using millet-based foods for improving immunity, energy, and overall health. The program also provided informative booklets and pamphlets on millet benefits, recipes, and tips for including them in daily diets.

Agriculture officials stressed that millets are rich in essential nutrients and contribute to sustainable farming practices. Participants were shown practical methods to cultivate, process, and incorporate millets efficiently. The program also highlighted the role of millets in preventing lifestyle diseases and promoting long-term health.

Cultural performances, including folk songs and dances, were part of the awareness campaign to engage the public and emphasize the traditional significance of millets in the region. District officials, agriculture officers, nutrition experts, and community leaders actively participated, ensuring the message reached a wide audience.

Dr. Bhaskar urged citizens to adopt millets in their daily diet, emphasizing their affordability, availability, and high nutritional value, making them an essential component for a healthy lifestyle and food security in Mandya and surrounding districts.

HC seeks clarification for renaming GBA wards

BENGALURU

The Karnataka High Court has sought detailed information from the state government on the criteria and procedures followed for renaming wards under the Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA). The court's direction came while hearing a Public Interest Litigation filed by 15 residents, including H.C. Basavarajappa, challenging the decision to rename Hemmigepura Ward as Kengeri Kote Ward. The petition was heard by a division bench comprising Chief Justice Vibhuk Bakhru and Justice C.M. Poonacha. During the hearing, the petitioners' counsel argued that Hemmigepura Ward has existed since the formation of BBMP. Even after the GBA Act came into effect and ward reorganisation began, the draft notification issued on September 3, 2025, retained the name Hemmigepura Ward. Following objections and review, the final notification issued on November 19 also confirmed the same name. However, on December 1, a revised notification abruptly changed the ward name to Kengeri Kote without inviting objections or following due legal process, the petitioners claimed. They alleged that the sudden change was politically motivated and influenced by local leaders to gain electoral advantage among specific communities and regions.

QUICK READ

Janapada Academy invites fellowship applications

MANDYA

The Karnataka Janapada Academy has invited applications for its Fellowship (Research Scholarship) programme. Interested candidates are requested to submit research proposals based on the specific topics listed on the Academy's official website. Applicants must select one approved topic, conduct field-based study, and submit a five-page synopsis. The synopsis should be sent by January 23, 2026 to: Registrar, Karnataka Janapada Academy, 2nd Floor, Kannada Bhavana, G.C. Road, Bengaluru – 560002. Candidates whose synopses are shortlisted will be called for an interview, and those selected will be permitted to carry out the fellowship research work.

Scientific sheep and goat rearing training for farmers

CHITRADURGA

The Department of Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Services is organizing a scientific sheep and goat rearing training for farmers on January 12–13 at the Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Training Center, located near the main post office in Chitradurga city. The program does not offer any financial incentives. Participation is limited to 25 farmers. Interested participants must bring a photocopy of their Aadhaar card, two passport-sized photos, bank passbook copy, and caste certificate for SC/ST candidates. For more information, farmers can contact 9482943111 or 9886002248.

CH CLASSIFIEDS
To place a classified ad contact: 080-41209042

NAME CHANGE

I, **TAHARA**, aged about 53 years, D/o ABDULRAZAK SAB, R/at: Ward No.12, Islampur, AD Colony, Chikkaballapur Town, karnataka. hereby declare that have changed my name from **TAHERA** to **TAHARA**. Vide affidavit dated: 07-01-2026, sworn before Notary P.V.Ramachandrareddy, Chickkballapur-562101.

NAME CHANGE

I **CHARALEL ALEYAMMA MANI** Also Known As prabha D/o Varkey Mani, resident of Good Shepherd Convent No 25, Museum Road, Richmond Town, Bengaluru - 560025, have changed my name **SISTER PRABHA**, Vide Affidavit Dated: 07.01.2026 before notary MEER HASSAN, Bengaluru.

NAME CHANGE

I, **ALEXANDER** , S/o Ashirvadham, resident of No. 9, 1st Floor, 1st Main, Valmiki Nagar, G.E.F Post, Bangalore -560026 , have changed my name to **CHAND PASHA**, vide affidavit dated: 07.01.2026, before Notary V. RAJASHEKHARA, Bengaluru

NAME CHANGE

I, **SYED ABDUL HAI ANJUM**, S/o Syed Abdul Azeem, resident of No .19 , Ground Floor, SMS Layout, J. P. Nagar 5th Phase, Bangalore -560078 , have changed my name to **SYED ABDUL HAI** , vide affidavit dated: 07.01.2026, before Notary V. RAJASHEKHARA, Bengaluru

NAME CHANGE

I, **FAAKIHA FIZA MUKHTAR KHAN RESHMA KHAN**, D/o Mukhtar Khan, resident of RADIAT ELITAIRE, Flat No. 412, 4th Floor, Kothanur, J.P. Nagar 8th Phase, Bus Stop, Uttarahalli, Bangalore -560076, have changed my name to **FAAKIHA FIZA,** vide affidavit dated: 07.01.2026, before Notary V. RAJASHEKHARA, Bengaluru

PUBLIC NOTICE

My Client Mrs. K.M.ROOPA W/o Sri Chinnaswamy residing at Ward No.03, N.E.S. Extension, Malavalli Town, Mandya District, is the full and absolute owner of the Schedule Property and she has lost the Original REGISTERED SALE DEED Dt:24.05.2013 in N.E.S. Extension, Malavalli on 07.01.2026 and the same is not traced till date. The said Registered Sale Deed was executed by Smt Nanjamma infavour of Smt Shylaja and the same is registered in Book-1, as Document No.MLV-1-00867-2013-14, stored in CD No.MLVD120 on 25.05.2013, in the Office Sub-Registrar, Malavalli. Hence, the finders of the said Original Registered Sale Deed Dt:24.05.2013 is hereby informed to contact the undersigned Advocate within 07 days from the date of this publication. Therefore, any person/s, Financial Institution/s having any right, claim or interest in the Schedule Property or portion of the Schedule Property, shall forward their objections to the under signed in writing along with supporting documents within 07 (Seven) days from the date of this Public Notice. Any claim or objection received after the expiry of the said period will not be binding over the schedule mentioned property and my client.

SCHEDULE PROPERTY : All that part and parcel of the Residential Site Property bearing No.40-524-22A, Assessment No.6963/5788 paiki situated at Ward No.3, 1st Division, Adarsha Convent Road, NES Extension, Malavalli Town, Mandya District, measuring East to West : 10.97 Meters and North to South : 15.24 Meters with Total Site Area of 167.18 Square Meters, coming under the limits of the Town Municipal Council, Malavalli, bounded on the:- East by : Property No.40-524-20, West by : Property No.40-524-24, North by : 40-524-7th Cross Road, South by : Property No.40-525-21.

SHIVAKUMAR, B.Com., LL.B.
Roll No. KAR/770/1987
ADVOCATE & NOTARY
#2917/A, 1st Floor, Opp. TTL College, Kantharaja Urs Road, Saraswathipuram, MYSURU-570 009
Mob.: 9342257404

Date : 07-01-2026 Place : Malavalli

IN THE COURT OF HON'BLE I ADDL. CIVIL JUDGE & J.M.F.C. AT K.G.F
C.M.C. No. 470 / 2025

PETITIONERS:
1.Smt. Narayanamma,
D/o. Late. Gangappa, W/o. M. Subramaniyam, Aged about 42 years,
R/at: Kanchanapalli Village, Belupalli Post, Palamneer Taluk, Chittoor District, Andhra Pradesh.
2.Smt. Sujatha,
D/o. Late. Gangappa, W/o. Narayanappa, Aged about 40 years,
R/at: No.177/b, Mullukrishnapuram, Shanthipuram Mandalam,
Palamneer Taluk, Chittoor District, Andhra Pradesh.
3. Smt. Susheelamma,
D/o. Late. Gangappa, W/o. Late. Venkatesh. K, Aged about 34 years,
R/at: Vijayapura Village, Avani Hobli, Mulbagal Taluk, Kolar District.
4. Smt. Prema,
D/o. Late. Gangappa, W/o. M. Munirathnam, Aged about 32 years,
R/at: Mulluru Krishnapuram, Shanthipuram Mandalam,
Palamneer Taluk, Chittoor District, Andhra Pradesh.

V/s.

RESPONDENT: The Tahsildar, K.G.F. Taluk, Robertsonpet, K.G.F.

PUBLIC NOTICE IN HOSADIGANTHA DAILY KANNADA NEWS PAPER

WHEREAS, the petitioners No.1 to 4 have filed petition under Section 13(3) of Registration of Birth & Death Act 1969, for obtaining the Death Certificate of the petitioners No.1 to 4 Father, by name GANGAPPA, S/o. Late. Muniyappa and Late. Smt. Mangamma, H/o. Late. Smt. Munivenkatamma, who was died on 04/04/2023, at Home: Dalavajoshahalli Village, Kadaripura Post, Kyasamballi Hobli, K.G.F. Taluk, Kolar District.

The hearing date of the case is posted on 03.02.2026. Any person having any claim or objection has to appear before this Hon'ble Court in person or by pleader on the above said hearing date at about 11.00 a.m. to answer the same, failing which the petition will be disposed of as ex-parte.

Given under my hand and seal of this Court on this 22/12/2025.

By the Order of the Court
CHIEF MINISTERIAL OFFICER
22/12/7025 ORL CIVIL JUDGE & ADDL. JMFC, KOLAR GOLD FIELDS

Advocate for Petitioners:
S. BHASKARAN, M.A., LL.B., Advocate, Oorgaumpet, K.G.F.
S. BHASKARAN, M.A., LL.B., Advocate, No. 662, Cheeaku Madu Street, Oorgaumpet Post, K.G.F.

GOVERNMENT OF KARNATAKA
Department of Health & Family Welfare
Karnataka State AIDS Prevention Society
Arogya Soudha, 4th Floor, 1st Cross, Magadi Road, Bengaluru-560023.
Tel: 080-29557021, email: pdksaps@gmail.com

No.KSAPS/DD (STD)/05/2025-26 **Dated: 07.01.2026**

Invitation for Tender (Two Cover) through e-Procurement

Tender (Two Cover) are invited for supply of STI Color Coded Kit-1 & Kit-6 under E-Procurement System. Details are available at e-procurement website: **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in.** Last date for submission of tender on **28/01/2026 at 5.30pm.**

Sd/- Project Director
DIPR/CP/4897/NR/2025-26 **Karnataka State AIDS Prevention Society, Bengaluru**

ನಗರಸಭಾ ಕಾರ್ಯಾಲಯ, ಹೊಸಕೋಟೆ
ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ಗ್ರಾಮಾಂತರ ಜಿಲ್ಲೆ, ಹೊಸಕೋಟೆ– 562114
ಸಹಾಯವಾಣಿ : 27931759, ದೂರವಾಣಿ : 27931221,
Email: itstaff_ulb_hosakote@yahoo.com Web Site.www.hosakotecity.mrc.gov.in

ನಂ:ನಸಹೊ/ತಾಂತ್ರಿಕ ಶಾಖೆ/ಟೆಂಡರ್/ಸಿಆರ್/10/2025–26 ದಿನಾಂಕ: 07.01.2026

"ಟೆಂಡರ್ ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆ" (ಇ–ಪ್ರೊಕ್ಯೂರ್‌ಮೆಂಟ್ ಕೆ.ಟಿ.ಪಿ.ಪಿ. ಪೋರ್ಟಲ್ ಮೂಲಕ)

ಪೌರಾಯುಕ್ತರು ನಗರಸಭೆ ಹೊಸಕೋಟೆ, ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು ಗ್ರಾಮಾಂತರ ಜಿಲ್ಲೆ ಇವರಿಂದ 2025–26ನೇ ಸಾಲಿನ ಸನ್ಮಾನ್ಯ ಮುಖ್ಯಮಂತ್ರಿಯವರ ಮೂಲಸೌಕರ್ಯ ಅಭಿವೃದ್ಧಿ ಯೋಜನೆಯಡಿಯಲ್ಲಿ, (CMIDP) ಈ ಕೆಳಕಂಡ ಕಾಮಗಾರಿಗಳಿಗೆ ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸ್ಟ್ಯಾಂಡರ್ಡ್ ಡಾಕ್ಯೂಮೆಂಟ್ **01/02/03ರ** ಪ್ರಕಾರ ಟೆಂಡರ್‌ನ್ನು ಏಕ/ದ್ವಿ–ಲಕೋಟೆ ಪದ್ಧತಿಯಡಿ ಅರ್ಹ ದರ್ಜೆಯ ನೋಂದಾಯಿತ ಗುತ್ತಿಗೆದಾರರಿಂದ/ಇ–ಪ್ರೊಕ್ಯೂರ್‌ಮೆಂಟ್ ಪೋರ್ಟಲ್ ಮುಖಾಂತರ ಟೆಂಡರ್‌ನ್ನು ಕರೆಯಲಾಗಿರುತ್ತದೆ.

ಕ್ರ.ಸಂ	ಕಾಮಗಾರಿಗಳ ವಿವರ	ಅಂದಾಜು ಮೊತ್ತ (ರೂ.ಲಕ್ಷಗಳಲ್ಲಿ)
	ಪರಿಶಿಷ್ಟ ಜಾತಿ ವರ್ಗದವರಿಗೆ ಕಾಯ್ದಿರಿಸಲಾದ ಕಾಮಗಾರಿಗಳು	
01	DMA/2025-26/OW/WORK_INDENT53589	42.00
02	DMA/2025-26/RD/WORK_INDENT53598	20.00
03	DMA/2025-26/OW/WORK_INDENT53587	85.00
04	DMA/2025-26/OW/WORK_INDENT53603	90.00
	ಪರಿಶಿಷ್ಟ ಪಂಗಡ ವರ್ಗದವರಿಗೆ ಕಾಯ್ದಿರಿಸಲಾದ ಕಾಮಗಾರಿಗಳು	
05	DMA/2025-26/OW/WORK_INDENT53601	32.00
	CAT-II(A)ರ ವರ್ಗದವರಿಗೆ ಕಾಯ್ದಿರಿಸಲಾದ ಕಾಮಗಾರಿ	
06	DMA/2025-26/OW/WORK_INDENT53591/CALL-2	65.00
07	DMA/2025-26/OW/WORK_INDENT53612	40.00
08	DMA/2025-26/RD/WORK_INDENT53605	20.00
	ಸಾಮಾನ್ಯ ವರ್ಗದವರಿಗೆ ಕಾಯ್ದಿರಿಸಲಾದ ಕಾಮಗಾರಿಗಳು	
09	DMA/2025-26/RD/WORK_INDENT53573/CALL-2	50.00
10	DMA/2025-26/OW/WORK_INDENT53590	27.00
11	DMA/2025-26/RD/WORK_INDENT53597	34.00
12	DMA/2025-26/OW/WORK_INDENT53602	40.00
13	DMA/2025-26/OW/WORK_INDENT53604	42.00
14	DMA/2025-26/OW/WORK_INDENT53606	36.00
15	DMA/2025-26/RD/WORK_INDENT53607	32.00
16	DMA/2025-26/RD/WORK_INDENT53613	30.00
17	DMA/2025-26/RD/WORK_INDENT53614	20.00
18	DMA/2025-26/OW/WORK_INDENT53615	35.00
19	DMA/2025-26/RD/WORK_INDENT53600	60.00

1) ಟೆಂಡರ್‌ನ್ನು ಸಲ್ಲಿಸಲು ಕೊನೆಯ ದಿನಾಂಕ ಮತ್ತು ಸಮಯ **22/01/2026** ರ ಸಂಜೆ **5:30** ಗಂಟೆಯವರೆಗೆ ಹಾಗೂ ಟೆಂಡರ್ ತಾಂತ್ರಿಕ ಬಿಡ್ ತೆರೆಯುವ ದಿನಾಂಕ ಮತ್ತು ಸಮಯ **27/01/2026** ಮತ್ತು ಆರ್ಥಿಕ ಬಿಡ್ ತೆರೆಯುವ ದಿನಾಂಕ **02.02.2026** ರ **ಬೆಳಗ್ಗೆ 11:00 ಗಂಟೆಗೆ** ನಿಗಧಿಪಡಿಸಲಾಗಿರುತ್ತದೆ.

2) ಟೆಂಡರ್ ದಾಖಲೆಗಳನ್ನು ಕರ್ನಾಟಕ ಸರ್ಕಾರದ ಇ–ಪ್ರೊಕ್ಯೂರ್‌ಮೆಂಟ್ ಪೋರ್ಟಲ್ **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in/#/portal/portal-home** ನಿಂದ ಡೌನ್‌ಲೋಡ್ ಮಾಡಿಕೊಳ್ಳುವುದು.

ಸಹಿ/–
ಪೌರಾಯುಕ್ತರು
ವಾಸಾಸಂಇ/ವಾ.ಪ್ರ/4911/ಶಿರಡಿಸಾಯಿ/2025–26 ನಗರಸಭೆ, ಹೊಸಕೋಟೆ

OFFICE OF THE
Prl. District and Sessions Judge, Mysuru,
Ph.No. - 08212330453 E-mail – rectmysurucourt@gmail.com

E-Tender Notification No.ADMN/RECT/08/2025

Sub: Inviting Proposals(Quotations) for providing 8 No.s Manpower Services through Outsource to the Courts of V JMFC, Mysuru and XIII Addl. Civil Judge and JMFC., Mysuru, District -reg.

Ref:

1. Government Order No. LAW-48, LCE 2017, Dated: 21.08.2019.
2. Circular No. LD 51 LWA 2017, dated: 29.12.2017 of Labour Department R/W No.KAE106 LWA 2021, dated:28.07.2022.
3. Circular of the Hon'ble Government of Karnataka, Finance Department ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ: ಆಇ 364 ವೆಚ್ಚ – 10/2019 ದ ದಿನಾಂಕ: 16.10.2019 ಮತ್ತು ಆಇ 428 ವೆಚ್ಚ –10/2019, ದಿನಾಂಕ: 21.08.2019.
4. Letter No. R.O.C.GOB.II.236/2012, Dated: 03.09.2019 of the Honorable High Court of Karnakata.
5. Office Notes and orders dated: 09.12.2025.

This Office invites e-Bidding calling for Proposals (Quotations) from Service providers who are interested to supply the Manpower through Outsource to the Courts of V JMFC, Mysuru and XIII Addl. Civil Judge and JMFC., Mysuru District from eligible and interested Firms/Agencies/Operators, through e- procurement portal **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in/,** for a period of 3 years, from the date of commencement and extendable beyond, until the on boarding of next subsequent tenderer, the details of the numbers of manpower of different cadres required, are as appended:

Item Code	Cadres	No.s	Total
V JMFC, Mysuru	Typist	1	8
	Attender	1	
	Peon	2	
XIII Addl. Civil Judge and JMFC., Mysuru.	Typist	1	
	Attender	1	
	Peon	2	

1. Tender Number: **ADMN/RECT/8/2025 dated:15.12.2025.**
2. Tender Name/Services sought for: **Manpower Services through Outsource to the Court of VJMFC, Mysuru and XIII Addl. Civil Judge and JMFC., Mysuru.**
3. Procuring Entity: **Prl. District and Sessions Court, Mysuru**
4. Validity of the Tender Contract: **3 years,**
5. Estimated Approximate Total Tender Cost: **Rs. 31,00,000/- per annum** (Approx. Estimation based on calculations of present Basic pay, VDA and except Service charges)
6. EMD Amount: **Rs. 62,000/-.**
7. Billing model: **Billing after completion of each calendar month, subject to the satisfactory performance.**
8. Closing Date & Time for submission of Tender proposal: **08.01.2026 at 04.30 P.M.**
9. Tender Opening Date & Time : **Technical: 12.01.2026 at 11.00 A.M. Financial: Upon approval of Technical Bid**
10. Office Contact Number & e-mail ID: **Ph.No. - 08212330453 E-mail – rectmysurucourt@gmail.com.**

Sd/-
I/c Chief Administrative Officer, District & Session Court, Mysore.
DIPR/CP/4909/NR/2025-26

Capacity-building program on POCSO and JJ Act

CHITRADURGA : A capacity-building program focusing on the protection of children's rights and safety, particularly the implementation of the POCSO Act and the Juvenile Justice (JJ) Act, was held on Wednesday at the Don Bosco Institution auditorium in Chitradurga. The event, jointly organized by the State Commission for Protection of Child Rights, District Administration, District Panchayat, School Education and Literacy Department, Women and Child Development Department, Police Department, Don Bosco Institution, and District Child Protection Unit, was inaugurated by Dr. K.T. Tippeswamy, Member of the Karnataka State Commission for Protection of Child Rights. Dr. Tippeswamy emphasized that schools are not just centers for education but also play a critical role in safeguarding children's rights. He provided detailed insights on child rights, child marriage prevention, and the JJ Act.

KARNATAKA URBAN WATER SUPPLY & DRAINAGE BOARD
KALABURAGI ZONE, KALABURAGI
Office of the Chief Engineer KUWS & D Board, Kalaburagi Zone,
"Jalbhavan", Rajapur, Kusnoor Road, Kalaburagi - 585105. Tel : 08472-220817,
Fax : 08472-260818 E-mail ID : kwbceklb14@gmail.com

No. KWB/CE(K)/TEC-2/WS/Balaji OHT/CALL-3/HSPT/2025-26/1312 Date : 06-01-2026

-: NOTICE INVITING TENDER – 3RD CALL:-

1) Detail of Work : "Construction of 10.00 Lakh Litre capacity Shaft Type Over Head Tank on 15mtr staging @ Sy No. 134/B/3A Park Premises Balaji Nagar (Patel High School) in Hosapete city under Nagarothana (Municipality) Phase-4 Grants. (LUMPSUM) (No Variation)(Work Indent No : **KUWSDB/2025-26/WS /WORK_INDENT464)**, 2) Amount of Estimate: **Rs. 194.75 Lakhs (Excluding GST),** 3) Eligibility of Contractor: Eligible Contractors, 4) Details of Tender application amount and EMD amount: Rs. 2,92,000/-, 5) Period of Completion: 12 (Twelve) Months, 6) Date and Time for commencement of downloading of tender documents from the e-procurement portal: **09-01-2026 after 17:10 Hours,** 7) Date & Time of Pre-Bid Meeting **: 16-01-2026 at 11:30 Hours,** 8) Last Date and Time for receipt of Tenders**: 23-01-2026 up to 17:15 Hours,** 9) Date and Time for Opening of Tender **: 27-01-2026 after 11:05 Hours,** 10) Addl. information**: Office of the Chief EngineerKUWS & D Board, Kalaburagi Zone,"Jalbhavan", Rajapur, Kusnoor Road,Telephone : 08472-220817 E-mail ID : kwbceklb14@gmail.com,** 11) Address of E-portal: **: www.kppp.karnataka.gov.in**

Sd/- Chief Engineer
DIPR/Kalaburagi/944/KSMC&A/2025-26 **KUWS & D Board, Kalaburagi Zone, Kalaburagi**

BANGALORE WEST CITY CORPORATION
Office of the Executive Engineer (Ele) B.W.C.C, # 98, 8th Cross, Malleshwaram, Bangalore - 560 003.

TN.No:EE(Ele)/BWCC/TN/01/2025-26 **Date: 05.01.2026**

INVITATION FOR SHORT TERM TENDER (Only through E-Procurement)

The Executive Engineer (Elec) invites tenders from eligible contractors for the works detailed in the table given below. The Contractors may submit tenders for any or all of the works given in the table in appropriate class registered in Bengaluru West City Corporation/G.B.A/CPWD/ KPWD/Railways/MES / any State or Central Govt. organization. **2.** Tender documents may be downloaded from Government of Karnataka e-Procurement website **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in/eportal/index.seam** under login for Contractors: **3.** Other details can be seen in the tender documents.

Sl. No.	Name of the Work/Estimate Amount in lakhs/EMD amount in Rs./Category
1	Repairs and Improvement Works of Electrical installations at Parks Coming under Govindrajnagar Constituency ward no 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142 & 143. (S.C). Est Amount : **Rs.25.00 Lakhs,** EMD **: Rs. 31,250/-.** Period For Completion : **120 days.**
2	Annual Electrical maintenance BBMP Hospital, coming under Govindarajnagar Constituency ward no 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142 & 143. (S.C). Est Amount : **Rs.40.00 Lakhs,** EMD **: Rs. 50,000/-.** Period For Completion : **365 days.**
3	Annual Electrical M & R to Electrical Crematorium and Animal Crematorium Including Replacement of Furnace Coils, Refactory Materials and Periodic Cleaning of Scrubbers Using Necessary Spare Parts, Tools, and Skilled Man Power etc, at Ward No 41-Kotigeplaya of RR Nagar Zone CALL-2 (General). Est Amount : **Rs.47.50 Lakhs,** EMD **: Rs. 59,375/-.** Period For Completion : **365 days.**
4	Repairs and Improvement Works of Electrical installations at Parks Coming under Malleshwaram Constituency ward no 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59 & 60. (CAT-I). Est Amount : **Rs.25.00 Lakhs,** EMD **: Rs. 31,250/-.** Period For Completion : **120 days.**
5	Repairs and maintenance of Community Hall Coming Under West Zone (ward No 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 153, 154, 155, 156, 157, 158, 159, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143) (CAT-IIA). Est Amount : **Rs.25.00 Lakhs,** EMD **: Rs. 31,250/-.** Period For Completion : **120 days.**
6	Annual Maintenance of Harishchandra Ghat Electrical Crematorium in Ward no 60. (CAT-IIA). Est Amount : **Rs.30.00 Lakhs,** EMD **: Rs. 37,500/-.** Period For Completion : **365days.**
7	Annual Electrical maintenance of All Type of BBMP Buildings, BBMP Hospital, Playground and Underpass including D.G.sets, motors Pumps, Air conditioners, UPS and connected accessories coming under Mahalakshmi Layout Constituency ward no 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52 & 53. (CAT-IIA) Est Amount : **Rs.50.00 Lakhs,** EMD **: Rs. 62,500/-.** Period For Completion : **365days.**
8	Annual Electrical Maintenance and Repairs Works to Buildings Coming Under Ward No 44 and 45 in RR Nagar Zone. CALL-3. (General). Est Amount : **Rs.24.00 Lakhs,** EMD **: Rs. 30,000/-.** Period For Completion : **365days.**
9	Supplying, Installation and Commissioning of Diesel Generator, AMF Panel Boards and Other Electricals Work to Executive Engineer Kengeri Division Office Building. CALL-3. (General). Est Amount : **Rs.40.00 Lakhs,** EMD **: Rs. 50,000/-.** Period For Completion : **120days.**
10	Annual Electrical maintenance of All Type of BBMP Buildings (Except BBMP Hospital) Playground and Underpass including D.G.sets, motors Pumps, Air conditioners, UPS and connected accessories coming under Govindarajnagar Constituency ward no 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142 & 143. (General). Est Amount : **Rs.25.00 Lakhs,** EMD **: Rs. 62,500/-.** Period For Completion : **365days.**
11	Repairs and Improvement Works of Electrical installations at Parks Coming under Rajajinagar Constituency ward no 129, 130, 131, 132, 133 & 134. (General). Est Amount : **Rs.25.00 Lakhs,** EMD **: Rs. 62,500/-.** Period For Completion : **120days.**
12	Annual Maintenance and Repairs to Electrical Installation at Dr BR Ambedkar Stadium in ward no 137. (General). Est Amount : **Rs.25.00 Lakhs,** EMD **: Rs. 62,500/-.** Period For Completion : **365days.**
13	Annual Electrical maintenance of All Type of BBMP Buildings, BBMP Hospital, Playground and Underpass including D.G.sets, motors Pumps, Air conditioners, UPS and connected accessories coming under Rajajinagar Constituency ward no 129, 130, 131, 132, 133 & 134. (General). Est Amount : **Rs.45.00 Lakhs,** EMD **: Rs. 1,12,500/-.** Period For Completion : **365days.**
14	Annual Electrical maintenance of All Type of BBMP Buildings, BBMP Hospital, Playground and Underpass including D.G.sets, motors Pumps, Air conditioners, UPS and connected accessories coming under Malleshwaram Constituency ward no 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59 & 60. (General). Est Amount : **Rs.50.00 Lakhs,** EMD **: Rs. 1,25,000/-.** Period For Completion : **365days.**

Calendar of events:
1. Tender Forms available for downloading from **12-01-2026. 2.** Last date for submission of Tender Document is **22-01-2026 up to 16.00 Hours. 3.** Date of Opening of Tenders is on **27-01-2026 at 11.00 Hours.**

Sd/- Executive Engineer, (Ele), BWCC

QUICK READ

Pulwama Police Seize 4.5 Kg Charas During Patrol

Srinagar

Pulwama police recovered 4.5 kilograms of charas during a routine patrol in the Kulpora area, dealing a major blow to drug traffickers. The contraband was seized after police intercepted Parvez Ahmed Dar, a resident of Kulpora, and recovered the substance during a search. He was arrested on the spot and booked under FIR No. 04/2026 under Sections 8 and 20 of the NDPS Act at Police Station Litter. Investigation is underway to trace the wider network. Police urged public cooperation, warning that drug profits often fund militancy. Authorities have intensified operations, seized heroin recently, and launched awareness drives to combat rising drug abuse regionally today.

NHAI Sets Two Guinness Records On Expressway

Amaravati

NHAI achieved two Guinness World Records during construction of the Bengaluru–Kadapa–Vijayawada Economic Corridor in Andhra Pradesh, Chief Minister N Chandrababu Naidu said on Wednesday. He said the feat included laying 28.95 lane-kilometres and 10,675 metric tonnes of bituminous concrete within 24 hours on NH-544G. Naidu credited the Union government's vision and Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari's leadership, praising engineers and workers. He added more records may be attempted by January 11.

Annamalai Slams DMK Over Thiruparankundram Issue

Chennai

BJP leader K Annamalai on Wednesday criticised Tamil Nadu Minister Regupathy over his remarks on the Thiruparankundram issue, calling the DMK government anti-Hindu. Reacting on social media, Annamalai said DMK leaders were insulting long-standing Hindu traditions and worship rights. He also accused the party of disrespecting court verdicts when criticised. Regupathy had questioned changes to customs while commenting on a Madras High Court order allowing lamp lighting atop the hill.

Rahul Gandhi Targets Government Over Donald Trump Remarks On Tariff

Rahul Gandhi criticised the government after Donald Trump's comments, comparing leadership responses with historical examples

NEW DELHI

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday took a dig at the central government following remarks made by US President Donald Trump about Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Gandhi shared an old video from a previous speech to underline what he called the difference between past and present leadership. The comments came after Trump spoke about tariffs imposed on India and his relationship with Modi during an event in the United States.

Trump said Modi was unhappy over higher tariffs linked to India's purchase of Russian oil. He claimed the Indian prime minister had reduced such imports after Washington's pressure. Trump also described his meetings with Modi and said they shared a good relationship despite disagreements.

Reacting on social media platform X, Gandhi posted the message "Farq samjho, sir ji" and shared a video recalling the 1971 war. In the clip, Gandhi said former prime minister Indira Gandhi did not bow to American pressure even when the US sent its Seventh Fleet. He contrasted this with his claim that Modi had surrendered after a phone call from Trump during an India Pakistan military standoff.

Congress leader Jairam Ramesh also criticised the prime minister, questioning the benefits of public diplomacy events held with Trump. He said slogans, hugs, and social media praise had not helped India's interests.

Trump has announced tariffs totalling 50 per cent on Indian goods, including a levy related to Russian oil purchases. He also spoke about delays in the supply of Apache helicopters to India, saying changes were being made. The Congress has repeatedly accused the government of failing to protect national interests amid growing pressure from Washington. The debate has intensified political exchanges ahead of upcoming parliamentary sessions and national discourse.

Maduro Abduction Violates International Law, Says Diplomat

NEW DELHI

Former Indian diplomat Dilip Sinha condemns alleged abduction of Venezuela's leader, calling it illegal and driven by oil interests

Former Indian diplomat Dilip Sinha on Wednesday described the reported abduction of Venezuela's head of state as a grave breach of international law and global norms. Sinha said the act amounted to an unjustified military action that violated the sovereignty of an independent nation and set a dangerous precedent for international conduct.

He alleged that the current US administration was now pressuring Venezuela's interim government to sell oil to the United States. Sinha said such actions were illegal and driven by economic interests rather than concern for the Venezuelan people. He claimed the focus on oil reflected an attempt to gain profit for the US, offering no benefit to Venezuela's citizens or economy.

Sinha further noted that the continued presence of US military ships near Venezuelan waters limited the freedom of the acting government. He said interim president Delcy Rodriguez was aware that open defiance of Washington was not possible under the prevailing military threat. According to him, this reality forced the interim leadership to balance its political preferences with pressure from the United States.

Sinha said Rodriguez's interactions with Russian and Chinese diplomats reflected her political leanings, but these moves were constrained by the heavy US military presence around Venezuela, limiting independent choices. His remarks came amid reports that US forces struck Venezuela and detained President Nicolas Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, now held in New York and denying drug and weapons charges. Rodriguez later announced seven days of national mourning and firmly rejected claims of foreign control, insisting Venezuela is governed only by its own people and institutions.

Sixty Derby Trophies Stolen From Mumbai Club Owner

MUMBAI

Around 60 silver and gold-studded trophies worth Rs 15.24 lakh have allegedly been stolen from the residence of a Mumbai club owner by his domestic help, police said.

Shiven Surendranath (59), an advertisement film director and owner of the Royal Western India Turf Club (RWITC) and Diamond Band Racing Syndicate Pvt Ltd, filed a complaint with Gamdevi police after discovering the loss. The trophies were won in various derby events between 2006 and 2025.

The theft reportedly took place between 2023 and November 2025 at Surendranath's flat in Westfield Estate Compound, Breach Candy, and south Mumbai. According to officials, domestic help Rajendra Benudhar Jena (42) from Odisha, employed for five years and living at the house for six months, is accused of the theft.

On November 23, 2025, Jena informed Surendranath he needed to travel to Kolkata for urgent work. Although he called five days later to say he was returning, he stopped answering calls. When Surendranath checked his trophy collection on January 2, 2026, he found several items missing.

A case was registered against Jena on Sunday, and police have begun a probe into the theft. Officials confirmed investigations are ongoing to recover the stolen trophies and determine how the domestic help allegedly carried out the theft. Surendranath said the stolen items include prominent trophies won in prestigious derbies, marking a significant personal and professional loss.

Syed Qasim Rasool Ilyas criticised the Supreme Court order denying bail to his son Umar Khalid

Ilyas Calls SC Bail Rejection Weird Without Precedent Case

NEW DELHI

Expressing disappointment over the Supreme Court's decision, Ilyas said the order was weird and without any precedent in the criminal justice system. He said the court had for the first time separated accused persons into two groups despite all of them being booked in the same case.

Ilyas questioned the logic behind calling Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam ideological architects, while describing the other accused as followers. He said this claim was not mentioned anywhere in the Delhi Police chargesheet.

On Monday, the Supreme Court rejected bail pleas of Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam in the 2020 North East Delhi riots case. However, it granted conditional bail to five others, including Gulfisha Fatima, Meeran Haider, Shifa-ur-Rehman, Mohammad Salim Khan, and Shadab Ahmad.

The court said Umar and Sharjeel stood on a higher footing in the alleged conspiracy, placing them above others in the hierarchy of participation.

Defending his son, Ilyas said Umar has spent nearly five years in jail without any proof against him. He said Umar was not in Delhi when the riots broke out, and did not make any provocative speech that could incite violence.

Ilyas said his son protested against the Citizenship Amendment Act and NRC, and asked whether peaceful dissent is no longer allowed in a democracy.

Referring to slogans raised at Jawaharlal Nehru University, he said students were protesting the denial of bail to the two accused. He criticised a growing trend of booking slogan shouters and said expressing anger should not be treated as a crime in a democratic society. He said such actions weaken democratic values and discourage citizens from questioning authority through lawful and peaceful means guaranteed by the Constitution.

Congress Suspends Ambernath Councillors Over Post-Poll BJP Alliance

MUMBAI

The Congress on Wednesday suspended 12 newly elected councillors in Maharashtra's Ambernath Municipal Council for entering into a post-poll tie-up with the BJP. The party also suspended Ambernath block president Pradip Patil and dissolved the local block unit, saying the alliance was formed without approval from the state leadership.

The action followed controversy after the BJP forged a post-election understanding with the Congress and the Ajit Pawar-led NCP in Ambernath, a town in Thane district. The alliance secured a majority of 31 seats in the 60-member council, even though the Eknath Shinde-led Shiv Sena emerged as the single largest party with 27 councillors.

In a letter issued by the Maharashtra Congress unit, the party said all councillors elected on the Congress symbol were suspended for indiscipline. It stated that the decision to join hands with the BJP was taken without informing or consulting senior leaders, making the move unacceptable.

Congress spokesperson Sachin Sawant clarified that there was no official alliance between the Congress and the BJP. He said several councillors, including independents, came together under the banner of the Ambernath Development Front to oppose alleged corruption by Shiv Sena at the local level. However, he added that the front was formed without party permission, leading to disciplinary action.

According to party sources, 12 Congress councillors, 14 BJP councillors, four NCP members, and one independent formed the local front after a meeting at a BJP office on December 31. A letter was later submitted to the Thane district collector.

BJP Alliances With Congress, AIMIM Trigger Maharashtra Storm

MUMBAI

Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Wednesday strongly warned local BJP leaders after reports surfaced of post-poll tie-ups with Congress and AIMIM in two municipal councils. He called these alliances unacceptable and a serious violation of party discipline.

Fadnavis stressed that the BJP will never join hands with Congress or AIMIM. He clarified that such decisions were made without the approval of senior leadership. "If any local leaders have entered into these alliances without permission, strict action will follow," he said, adding that orders have already been issued to cancel the arrangements.

The controversy began in Ambernath, where BJP leaders formed the 'Ambernath Vikas Aghadi' with Congress and Ajit Pawar's NCP, sidelining ally Shiv Sena. In Akot, BJP leaders joined AIMIM under the banner of 'Akot Vikas Manch.' Both moves lacked party approval.

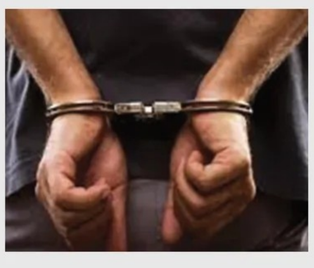
The developments have put the ruling Mahayuti alliance—comprising BJP, Shiv Sena (Eknath Shinde faction), and Ajit Pawar's NCP—under scrutiny. In Ambernath, the BJP–Congress–NCP group won 31 seats in the 60-member council, while Shiv Sena secured 27. BJP's Tejashree Karanjule Patil was elected council president, defeating Shiv Sena's Manisha Walekar.

Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut accused BJP of opportunism, saying the party was ready to ally with anyone for power. Sena MLA Dr Balaji Kinikar called it a betrayal of coalition principles and against BJP's "Congress-mukt Bharat" slogan.

In Akot, BJP's Maya Dhule became mayor with AIMIM's support. The BJP leadership is now expected to take corrective steps to contain the fallout.

Lover, Friend Arrested For Staging Accident Attempt

PATHANAMTHITTA



What initially appeared as a road accident has been revealed as a pre-planned crime driven by obsession and deceit. Police arrested a 24-year-old man, Ranjith Rajan of Mammoodu, Konni, and his friend Ajas (19) from Payyanamon, for attempting to harm a woman to win her trust.

The woman had been in a prior relationship with Ranjith, who wanted to regain control over her life. On December 23, around 5.30 pm, she was riding her scooter home from Adoor when a car followed and rammed her vehicle from behind at Vazhamuttam East. She fell and sustained serious injuries, including a dislocated elbow, a fractured little finger, and multiple cuts and bruises.

Ranjith then arrived in an Innova, claiming to be her husband and presenting himself as a caring rescuer, taking her to a private hospital in Konni. Initially, the incident was treated as an accident. However, inconsistencies during investigation raised suspicion.

A deeper probe revealed the accident was staged: Ajas deliberately hit the scooter under Ranjith's instructions, while Ranjith pretended to be a concerned partner to gain sympathy from the woman and her family. Police have now added attempted murder charges to the case.

"The accused thought they could manipulate emotions by creating fear and gratitude, but their plan caused serious injuries and could have led to death," said a police officer.

The case is being investigated by Sub-Inspector Alexkutty S of Pathanamthitta police. Both accused were arrested and produced before the court, and further investigation is ongoing to understand the full extent of the conspiracy.

HEALTHCARE QUALITY

India Achieves 50,000 NQAS Healthcare Certifications Milestone

NEW DELHI

The Union Health Ministry on Wednesday announced that India has crossed a historic milestone of over 50,000 National Quality Assurance Standards, or NQAS, certifications, strengthening public healthcare services nationwide. As of December 31, a total of 50,373 public health facilities across states and union territories have been certified under the quality framework set by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

The ministry called the achievement a proud moment for the country's public health system. It said the milestone shows the government's strong commitment to quality, safety, and patient focused care, especially for poor, vulnerable, and marginalised communities. Officials added that the effort helps ensure equal access to reliable healthcare services across India.

The NQAS programme began in 2015 with only 10 certified facilities, mainly district hospitals. Its aim was to improve patient safety, service quality, and accountability. Over the years, the framework expanded to include sub district hospitals, community health centres, Ayushman Arogya Mandir primary health centres, urban primary health centres, and sub health centres.

The introduction of virtual assessments has played a major role in expanding coverage. Certified facilities rose sharply from 6,506 in December 2023 to 22,786 by December 2024. This number further jumped to 50,373 by December 2025, marking progress short period.

Of the total, 48,663 are Ayushman Arogya Mandirs, while 1,710 are secondary care facilities such as CHCs, SDHs, and district hospitals. The ministry said the growth supports India's Universal Health Coverage goals under the National Health Policy 2017. It credited capacity building, digital tools, more assessors, and quality improvement for the success.

QUICK READ

Assam Rifles Seize Fake Cigarettes Worth Lakhs

Silchar

The Assam Rifles, in coordination with the Customs Department, seized counterfeit cigarettes worth ₹34 lakh from a godown in Silchar on Tuesday. The consignment was reportedly being moved for distribution across the state. Assam Rifles said such joint operations are part of ongoing efforts to curb counterfeit goods in the region. Earlier, the force recovered over 11 kg of Methamphetamine in Mizoram, valued at ₹33.18 crore, highlighting their active role against illegal drug and counterfeit trafficking.

Massive Fire Engulfs Delhi Footwear Factory Premises

New Delhi

A huge fire broke out at a footwear factory in Narela Bhorgarh Industrial Area on Wednesday afternoon. Workers inside the factory managed to escape safely, but the blaze engulfed all three floors. Over a dozen fire tenders are at the site working to control the fire. In a separate incident, a fire at a Delhi Metro staff quarter in Adarsh Nagar on Tuesday early morning killed three family members. The cause is suspected to be domestic items.

Document Lost

This is to inform to General public that my client Smt, Sunandamma C/o B.Murthy, , Situated at Thavarakere Village, Thavarakere Gramapanchayth, Hosakote Taluk, Bengaluru Rural District, I am the Owner of the Below said Property,while Sale Deed for taken Certified copy ,have lost following Document of property pertating to below Mentioned property Situated at Thavarakere Village, Thavarakere Gramapanchayth, Hosakote Taluk, Bengaluru Rural District, had published the factum of lost of her Original Sale Deed,Dated;- 10-02-2006, Regd Sale Deed to be Executed By Smt, Saraswathamma w/o Late, N.C.Siddeshappa, in Favour of Sri, T.N.Vijayakumar s/o Late, Nyanabasappa, in Respect of Property Bearing E-Swathu Form No.11A, E-Swathu No.150300401800700153, Property No.3/147/142/139,In measuring East to west 12.19 Meters, North to South 6.096 Meters, Totally measuring 74.322432 Sq Meters, Builiding Area 55.741824 Sq Meters, Situated at Thavarakere Village, Thavarakere Gramapanchayth, Hosakote Taluk, Bengaluru Rural District,in Regd as Book no.1, Volume no.HSK-1-05020/2005-06,InCDNO. HSKD 53, Dated;-10-02-2006, in SRO Hosakote, police complaint have been filed with regards to loss of the above said Document vide complaint in NCR NO. Lost Report no.1995891/2026, DATED;-06-01-2026, and complaint dated;-06-01-2026, as above, by respective person,if anybody finds these Document please inform within 7 Days in Below mentioned Address.
Place;-Chinthamani,
Date;-06-01-2026.

K.S.HARISH KUMAR
ADVOCATE
Office: NEAR KISHORE SCHOOL, ABOVE APPOLO PHARMACY, BESIDE SANTHOSHI MATHA TEMPLE, BANGALORE MAIN ROAD CHINTHAMANI.

Delhi CM Rekha Gupta Hosts Lunch Pe Charcha Event

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta will host 'Lunch Pe Charcha' on January 11 to engage youth in governance dialogue.

NEW DELHI

Delhi Chief Minister Rekha Gupta will host a live interaction with city youngsters on January 11. The programme, titled 'Lunch Pe Charcha', aims to engage youth in open dialogue on governance, grievances, and innovative solutions.

The Chief Minister invited young people across Delhi to join the event ahead of National Youth Day. "Since it's a working day and you will all be busy, Sunday, January 11 – Let's meet over lunch," Gupta posted on social media.

The initiative follows the model of the Prime Minister's popular 'Pariksha Pe Charcha', focusing on connecting government policies with citizens.

The interaction will cover three main agendas. First, young people can voice grievances and concerns accumulated over the past 11 years. Second, the programme will review the last 11 months of governance under Gupta's leadership since February 2025. Third, it will encourage participants to propose practical ideas and plans to turn their suggestions into actionable outcomes.

To participate, interested youngsters are requested to comment or send a direct message to the Chief Minister's official social media handles. Each session will allow 15–20 individuals to actively join the discussion, ensuring a focused and productive conversation.

Through 'Lunch Pe Charcha', Gupta aims to bridge the gap between youth and administration, seeking fresh perspectives to address Delhi's challenges. The initiative is also intended to align Delhi's development plans with the broader national goal of 'Vision 2047' set by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. By engaging directly with young citizens, the Chief Minister hopes to foster a participatory approach to governance and encourage innovative solutions for the city's growth and welfare.

Owaisi Criticises Delhi Turkman Gate Demolition Drive

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR

All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) Chief Asaduddin Owaisi on Wednesday strongly criticised the demolition drive carried out by the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) near Faiz-e-Elahi Masjid at Turkman Gate. He alleged that the operation resulted in loss to Waqf property and involved procedural lapses.

Owaisi said, "The land belongs to Waqf. On November 12, the Delhi High Court gave a judgment. However, the petitioner, Save India Foundation, with an RSS background, went to court without including Waqf as a party. The Waqf Board should have filed a review petition. As a result, the court took a wrong decision."

Owaisi highlighted the historical importance of the site, noting that it was a mosque in 1947 and that the Places of Worship Act, 1991 should have been respected. He urged, "The Delhi Waqf Board and its managing committee should approach the Supreme Court, present all facts, and restore the status quo."

The MCD conducted the demolition drive in early hours of January 7, 2026, targeting encroached areas near Turkman Gate and Ramlila Maidan, following a Delhi High Court order. Stone-pelting incidents were reported, leading to detention of five individuals, while five police personnel sustained minor injuries. Authorities said prior coordination meetings were held with local stakeholders, but a few miscreants attempted to disrupt the operation.

AIMIM Chief Asaduddin Owaisi condemns Delhi demolition drive near Turkman Gate, citing Waqf property loss and procedural lapses, urging Delhi Waqf Board to approach the Supreme Court

Separately, Owaisi commented on the Supreme Court denying bail to Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam, calling it "surprising and shocking," while noting bail was granted to others linked to the 2020 northeast Delhi riots case.

Kerala Cop Suspended Over Alleged Molestation Complaint

KOCHI

A Kerala police officer, Civil Police Officer (CPO) Vijesh of Palluruthy Police Station in Ernakulam, was suspended on Wednesday following a complaint of molestation during a passport verification process. The Kochi City Harbour Police registered a case against him, and authorities said the matter is being treated with utmost seriousness and may lead to his arrest. According to the complaint, the woman had applied for a passport and was contacted by Vijesh as part of routine police verification. She alleged that the officer asked her to come in person for verification and directed her to a walkway within the Harbour Police Station limits, where he allegedly molested her, abusing his official authority.

Senior police officials said strict action will follow, emphasizing that such conduct brings disrepute to the force and will not be tolerated. Departmental proceedings have also been initiated alongside the criminal case. It has emerged that similar complaints had been raised previously against Vijesh, which may influence the ongoing investigation and inquiry.

The incident has sparked widespread criticism as it involves alleged misuse of official power during a citizen-facing service that requires public trust. Authorities acknowledged the embarrassment caused to the department and assured swift, firm, and uncompromising corrective action.

Police reiterated their commitment to ensuring justice for the complainant and restoring public confidence. The case highlights concerns over police conduct and underscores the need for stronger safeguards, particularly in interactions involving women applicants. Officials stressed that all measures will be taken to act decisively against any wrongdoing within the force.

The Kerala High Court is satisfied with SIT progress and grants six more weeks to complete Sabarimala gold probe

Kerala High Court Extends SIT Probe Into Sabarimala Gold

KOCHI

The Kerala High Court on Monday expressed satisfaction with the progress of the Special Investigation Team (SIT) probing the alleged theft of gold from the Sabarimala Sreekovil and extended the investigation deadline by six weeks. The Division Bench of Justice Raja Vijayaraghavan V and Justice KV Jayakumar monitored the case, which arose from a suo motu writ petition concerning the removal and misappropriation of gold from temple structures.

During the hearing, ADGP H Venkatesh, SIT chief, Investigating Officer S Sasidharan, IPS, and the Travancore Devaswom Board's Chief Vigilance and Security Officer presented a detailed status report. Crime No. 3700 of 2025

involves gold removal from the Dwarapalaka idol plates and side pillars, with 15 accused and nine arrests. Crime No. 3701 pertains to gold from Sreekovil door frames, with nine of 12 accused arrested. So far, 181 witnesses have been examined.

The investigation spans from 1998, when the UB Group first applied gold cladding, up to September 2025, when the Dwarapalakas were sent for replating. The SIT divided the probe into four phases: gold cladding, door replacement in 2019, removal of plates, and 2025 gold-plating transactions. Investigators analysed call records, seized phones, scrutinised bank accounts, and collected documents to detect disproportionate assets. Samples were sent to Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre for scientific verification of gold quantity and replacement.

The Court praised the SIT for a professional investigation and warned against media speculation that could undermine its integrity. It also allowed the SIT chief to include additional officers of "highest integrity" if required, with reporting to the Court. Considering the case's complexity, the Bench extended the probe by six weeks and scheduled the next hearing for January 19, 2026.

Himachal Government To Frame Senior Residency Policy

SHIMLA

Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Thakur Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu announced that the state government will frame a comprehensive Senior Residency Policy for all medical colleges to optimise healthcare human resources and strengthen medical services. The policy will rationalise senior resident posts and increase the General Duty Officer quota to 66 percent from the existing 50:50 ratio. MD and MS programmes in additional disciplines will be introduced at medical colleges in Chamba, Nahan, Hamirpur, and Nerchowk. To enhance specialised care, DM and MCh super-specialists will be appointed and state-of-the-art ICUs established. The government will also deploy 1,000 Rogi Mitras to improve patient facilitation, with pilot initiatives beginning in Hamirpur and major hospitals.

Madras HC reserves order in Vijay's Jana Nayagan censor dispute

CHENNAI

The Madras High Court on Wednesday reserved its orders in the case relating to delays in the certification of actor-politician Vijay's film Jana Nayagan, after hearing arguments from the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) and the film's producer, KVN Studios.

Justice P.T. Asha heard submissions from Additional Solicitor General Sundaresan, appearing for the CBFC, and counsel for the producer. The court reserved its decision after KVN Studios informed it that 27 cuts had already been made in the film in line with the examining committee's directions for granting a U/A 16+ certificate.

During the hearing, the court questioned the CBFC's decision to send the film for a fresh review even after the producer had complied with the examining committee's recommendations. In response, the CBFC argued that if the Chairperson is dissatisfied with the committee's suggestions, the film can be referred to a revising committee. It said Jana Nayagan would be reviewed by a fresh panel whose members were not part of the original examining committee.

> The Madras High Court has reserved its orders in the Jana Nayagan certification case after hearing arguments from the CBFC and producer KVN Studios over delays, complaints, and the film's U/A 16+ clearance.

The CBFC told the court that the producer had been informed of this decision through an email dated January 5, and denied any ulterior motive behind the referral. When asked why the producer was not informed earlier, the board maintained that the process followed was lawful.

KVN Studios countered that the examining committee comprised five members who recorded their views independently. According to the producer, the majority had agreed to grant a U/A 16+ certificate subject to specific cuts, but one member later raised a complaint with the CBFC Chairperson. The producer argued that the dissenting view of a single member could not override the collective decision of the committee.

Emphasising the financial stakes, KVN Studios said it had invested around ₹500 crore in the project and had applied for certification under the Tatkal scheme on December 18, while announcing a January 9 release date. It further contended that once the examining committee had cleared the film subject to cuts, the CBFC could not refer it to a revising committee.

The CBFC, however, submitted that it had received a complaint alleging that the film hurt the sentiments of a minority community and that certain defence force emblems were depicted in the film. Based on these concerns, the matter was referred for review. The ASG added that the CBFC Chairperson has the authority to review a film until a certificate is formally issued. After hearing both sides, the High Court reserved its order, which will determine the fate of the film's release.

Udhayanidhi Stalin Felicitates Tamil Nadu Skill Competition Winners

CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu Deputy Chief Minister Udhayanidhi Stalin on Wednesday felicitated the winners of the Tamil Nadu Skill Competition 2025, highlighting the state government's initiatives to boost student employability through skill development programmes. He said the efforts have so far helped 1,200 students secure jobs, and the government plans to organise over 100 job melas by June with top companies like Infosys, Tata, and TVS participating.

Stalin emphasised that these skill development initiatives are designed to equip students with industry-relevant expertise and create better career opportunities. He also mentioned the free laptop scheme launched by Chief Minister MK Stalin, aimed at supporting students with access to technology and digital resources.

The Deputy Chief Minister praised the collaboration between government departments and private companies, stating that the programmes not only provide training but also facilitate direct recruitment. He added that similar measures strengthen the overall educational ecosystem in Tamil Nadu while promoting inclusivity.

Earlier, Chief Minister MK Stalin inaugurated development projects worth over Rs 1,700 crore in Kallakurichi district, including new industrial units, welfare schemes, and educational initiatives. The government has implemented programmes such as the Kalaignar Women's Rights Scheme, Thayumaanavar scheme, Naan Mudhalvan initiative, and breakfast programmes, benefiting thousands of women, students, and youth across the district.

Stalin highlighted the state's industrial growth, foreign investment inflow, and improvements in sectors like education, transport, heritage conservation, and child nutrition. He reiterated that Tamil Nadu's inclusive development model, combining skill training, welfare schemes, and infrastructure growth, is creating opportunities for students and women while strengthening the state's economy.

ROAD SAFETY

Assam Adopts SaveLIFE Foundation Zero-Fatality Solutions Road

GUWAHATI

Assam is observing National Road Safety Month in January by adopting science-backed road safety measures developed by the SaveLIFE Foundation (SLF). The initiative aligns with the theme of "Zero-Fatality Month" and aims to reduce the state's road crash fatalities through effective interventions in infrastructure, enforcement, trauma care, and community awareness.

The programme focuses on data-driven risk identification, where districts pinpoint their top three high-risk road corridors and ten critical crash locations. Multi-pillar interventions include improved signage, pedestrian infrastructure, safer junctions, speed control, and

strict enforcement against drunk driving, speeding, and helmet and seat belt violations. Emergency response is strengthened by strategic ambulance placement and better trauma care readiness. Community engagement campaigns target high-risk groups to raise awareness about road safety.

SLF's Zero-Fatality model has already been implemented across 100 national highways and 100 districts, achieving 30-60% reduction in road crash fatalities on many stretches, including the Mumbai-Pune Expressway and Yamuna Expressway. Weekly monitoring, mid-term reviews, and district-level accountability ensure measurable outcomes, while solutions are tailored to local contexts with community collaboration.

Piyush Tewari, Founder-CEO of SLF, said, "India loses over 450 lives daily in road crashes. When science-backed road design, strict enforcement, trauma care, and district accountability come together, fatalities fall significantly. Zero fatalities are achievable when governance treats road safety as a public health priority."

Assam's adoption of SLF's model involves coordination among transport, police, health, education, urban and rural local bodies, and district administrations, aiming to integrate scientific road safety solutions into local governance systems and deliver tangible reductions in road crash deaths.

QUICK READ

Afghan police seize 130 kg of drugs

Kabul

Afghan police confiscated 130 kilograms of illegal drugs and arrested 36 suspected smugglers across several provinces, officials said Wednesday. In Badakhshan, authorities seized opium and hashish, detaining one person. Additional arrests occurred in Bamiyan, Kunduz, Parwan, and Laghman, where a drug lab was destroyed. Hundreds of narcotic tablets, crystal meth, and hashish were recovered. Authorities said these actions are part of a larger campaign to curb production and trafficking nationwide. Police have been conducting targeted operations since late 2025, aiming to disrupt smuggling networks and maintain law and order throughout Afghanistan's provinces.

China detains six members of underground church

Beijing

Chinese police have detained six members of the Early Rain Covenant Church, a large underground Protestant group in Chengdu, the church said Wednesday. The arrests, including church leader Li Yingqiang, follow recent crackdowns on unregistered religious groups across China. Authorities have tightened control over "house churches," restricting fundraising, preaching, and gatherings outside state-approved churches. Human rights groups called for the immediate release of those detained. China has millions of Christians in both registered and unofficial congregations. This is the latest in a series of raids targeting underground churches, including major operations in Wenzhou and against the Zion Church last year.

Strong earthquake jolts southern Philippines coastal area

Phivolcs reported a 6.4-magnitude quake at 23 km depth, urging nearby residents to watch for aftershocks

MANILA

A strong earthquake measuring 6.7 in magnitude struck off the southern Philippines on Wednesday, according to the United States Geological Survey, but authorities said there were no immediate reports of deaths or major damage.

The quake occurred about 68 kilometres east of Baculin, a village in the town of Hinatuan in Surigao del Sur province. The USGS said the earthquake struck at a shallow depth of around 10 kilometres, which often increases the chance of strong shaking near the surface.

The Philippine Institute of Volcanology and Seismology, known as Phivolcs, recorded

the quake at a slightly lower magnitude of 6.4 and said it occurred at a depth of 23 kilometres. The agency warned residents in nearby areas to stay alert for possible aftershocks and minor damage.

Local police and disaster response officials said people felt the tremor clearly, but early checks did not show any injuries or structural damage. Joey Monato, the police chief of Hinatuan, said the shaking was noticeable but brief. He added that many residents rushed outside their homes as a precaution.

Phivolcs director Teresito Bacolcol said the epicentre was close to the area where two strong earthquakes struck in October last year, killing seven people. Despite this, he said the latest quake was unlikely to trigger a tsunami.

"It will not generate destructive tsunami waves," Bacolcol said, explaining that the depth and location reduced that risk.

The Philippines lies along the Pacific Ring of Fire, a region known for frequent earthquakes and volcanic activity, making seismic events a common part of life for many communities.

CYPRUS TAKES EU HELM WITH ZELENSKIY VISIT

NICOSIA

Cyprus on Wednesday formally took over the rotating presidency of the European Union, beginning its six-month term with a high-profile meeting attended by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy and senior EU leaders. The opening event underlined the bloc's continued focus on Ukraine and wider regional stability.

Zelenskiy was welcomed at the presidential palace in Nicosia by Cypriot President Nikos Christodoulides. European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and European Council President Antonio Costa also joined the discussions, marking a strong show of unity at the start of Cyprus's term.

Speaking briefly before the meeting, Zelenskiy said he hoped Cyprus's presidency would help move Ukraine closer to EU membership. He added that the talks would also cover outcomes from a meeting held in Paris a day earlier, where the United States backed a broad group of Ukraine's allies pledging security guarantees if a ceasefire is reached and Russia attacks again.

A formal ceremony later in the day will include leaders from the Middle East, such as Lebanese President Joseph Aoun. Cyprus says this reflects its ambition to act as a bridge between Europe and the eastern Mediterranean region.

Although Cyprus has traditionally maintained close political and cultural ties with Russia, it has fully supported EU sanctions against Moscow since the invasion of Ukraine. Many Cypriots draw parallels between Russia's actions in Ukraine and Turkey's military intervention in northern Cyprus in 1974, after a coup linked to the then Greek military regime.

Zelenskiy's visit was widely seen as a clear political signal of ongoing EU support for Kyiv as the war with Russia enters its fifth year. President Christodoulides said Cyprus's presidency will focus on strengthening EU autonomy and deeper integration to face growing global challenges.

Japan slams China export ban amid tensions

TOKYO

Japan on Wednesday strongly criticised China's decision to ban exports of dual use items linked to military purposes, calling the move unacceptable and warning of wider economic risks if restrictions expand further. The dispute marks one of the sharpest escalations between Asia's two largest economies in recent years.

The ban applies to goods and technologies that have both civilian and military uses, including certain critical minerals used in electronics, chips and drones. Japanese officials said the decision unfairly targets Japan and goes against normal international trade practices. The remarks came amid reports that Beijing may also consider curbs on rare earth exports, a move that could severely impact Japanese manufacturing.

The row was triggered late last year after Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi said a possible Chinese attack on Taiwan could pose an existential threat to Japan. China demanded the comments be withdrawn, but Tokyo has stood by its position. Since then, Beijing has announced several countermeasures. Japanese markets reacted negatively, with the Nikkei index falling about one percent. Shares of major defence related companies also declined. Analysts warned that broader restrictions on rare earths could hurt sectors such as automobiles and electric vehicles, where Japan still depends heavily on Chinese supplies. Experts estimate that even a short term rare earth export curb could cost Japanese businesses billions of yen and reduce economic growth. Japanese automakers said they are closely watching developments.

France prepares response to possible Greenland move

PARIS

France is working closely with its allies to prepare a coordinated response if the United States takes steps to gain control of Greenland, a French minister said on Wednesday. The issue has raised fresh concern across Europe after US President Donald Trump renewed his interest in the strategic Arctic island. French Foreign Minister Jean Noel Barrot said Paris wants any response to be collective and discussed with European partners. He said the matter would be raised with the foreign ministers of Germany and Poland, stressing that unity was essential in dealing with such a sensitive situation.

European leaders and Canada have publicly backed Greenland in recent days, saying the island belongs to its people. Greenland is an autonomous territory within the Kingdom of Denmark and is covered by Denmark's membership of NATO, making any military action a serious test for the alliance. Trump has argued that Greenland is vital for US security and missile defence and has claimed Denmark has failed to protect it properly. The White House has said Washington is discussing different options, including a possible purchase, though Greenland and Denmark have both said the island is not for sale.

Barrot said he had spoken with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, who ruled out a military invasion. Still, concerns remain after recent US actions elsewhere revived fears of unpredictable moves.

South Korea aims to improve China relations after 2017 tensions, with Lee emphasizing trust-building through consistent action

Korean peninsula tensions need patience, says President

SEOUL

South Korean President Lee Jae Myung said on Wednesday that trust with China is improving and that he has asked Chinese President Xi Jinping to help mediate talks with North Korea. Lee spoke to reporters in Shanghai after meeting Xi during a state visit, saying patience would be needed to reduce tension on the Korean peninsula.

Lee said he explained Seoul's repeated but unsuccessful efforts to reopen dialogue with nuclear armed North Korea. He asked Beijing to use its influence to encourage talks aimed at peace and stability. According to Lee, Xi listened and acknowledged those efforts, while stressing that progress takes time and steady action.

The South Korean leader said his government wants to enter a new phase in relations with China after several difficult years. Ties cooled after South Korea deployed a United States missile defence system in 2017, a move that led to trade and cultural restrictions from Beijing. Lee said rebuilding trust and respect requires consistent work, not just words.

Lee and Xi have met twice in less than three months, a sign of warmer contacts. Lee said both sides discussed the wider region and the need to manage differences carefully while protecting core national interests. He added that recent tensions between China and Japan should be resolved through dialogue.

South Korea's president said his country values stable ties with all major partners. He stressed that relations with Japan remain as important as ties with China, especially at a time of rising security risks in Northeast Asia. He said cooperation from regional powers is vital to lower risks and keep dialogue open.

Pak explores jet sales, strengthens Bangladesh ties

ISLAMABAD

Pakistan and Bangladesh discussed a defence pact, including the potential sale of JF-17 fighter jets, officials said Wednesday. Air chiefs from both countries met to review military cooperation, with Pakistan offering fast delivery of Super Mushshak trainer aircraft and long-term support. The talks highlight warming ties after Bangladesh's political upheaval last year, which strained its relations with India.

China diplomat Africa tour targets trade routes

BEIJING

China's top diplomat has begun his annual New Year tour of Africa, with a strong focus on securing strategic trade routes and strengthening economic ties across the continent. Foreign Minister Wang Yi started the visit on Wednesday, signalling Beijing's continued priority on Africa in its global diplomacy.

The tour, running until January 12, will take Wang to Ethiopia, Somalia, Tanzania and Lesotho. These countries are seen as important partners in China's efforts to protect shipping lanes, access natural resources and expand export markets. Ethiopia, one of Africa's fastest growing economies, is a key destination as China looks to deepen trade with young and increasingly affluent populations.

Somalia holds strategic importance due to its location near the Gulf of Aden, a major global shipping corridor linking Asia to Europe through the Red Sea. Wang's visit will be the first by a Chinese foreign minister to Somalia in decades and is expected to boost Mogadishu's diplomatic standing after recent regional developments.

In Tanzania, discussions are likely to focus on logistics and infrastructure. The country serves as a gateway linking mineral rich central Africa to the Indian Ocean. Chinese companies are already refurbishing the Tazara Railway, which connects Tanzania to Zambia, helping secure access to copper and other resources.

The visit to Lesotho highlights China's push to promote free trade with poorer nations. Beijing has offered tariff free access to its massive market for least developed countries, a move aimed at supporting exports and economic growth.

Chinese officials said the tour aims to deepen political trust, expand cooperation and strengthen long term partnerships. Analysts say the trip reflects China's broader strategy to secure trade routes, counter global competition and reinforce its influence across Africa through investment, infrastructure and diplomacy.

Taiwan says China drills target global support

TAIPEI

Taiwan on Wednesday said China's recent military exercises around the island were aimed at weakening growing international support for Taipei and shifting attention away from Beijing's domestic economic problems. The assessment was made by Taiwan's National Security Bureau in a report submitted to Parliament.

According to the report, China's war games, named "Justice Mission 2025", involved firing dozens of rockets and deploying large numbers of warships and aircraft near Taiwan. The drills disrupted civilian life, forcing the cancellation of several domestic flights, and triggered concern among regional allies and Western countries.

Taiwan's security agency said the exercises carried clear political intent. It stated that Beijing was trying to counter backing from democratic partners by creating pressure in the international arena. The report also said China sought to channel public frustration over economic challenges and social stress at home into nationalist sentiment by portraying Taiwan as a target of external interference.

The report highlighted that China has stepped up a "hybrid" campaign against Taiwan, combining military pressure with economic coercion, cyberattacks and information warfare. It said state media, artificial intelligence generated content and coordinated online activity were used to spread narratives questioning Taiwan's defence capabilities and undermining trust in President Lai Ching te and the United States.

Taiwanese authorities said more than 19,000 controversial messages were circulated online during the drills, while government systems faced over two million cyberattacks within two days. Several hacking groups linked to China's military were identified as active participants.

SU DO KU

Brain-Bender: Can You Solve It?

8	9		7		4	5	2	
	4			1			8	
		7		8		1		4
9		4	2		3		1	
	7			4		9		8
6		5	8		9		4	
	5	2		9	6	8	3	1
			1					
1		8	5	2		4		

4	2	5	6	9	2	7	8	3
3	9	2	7	1	8	5	4	6
8	6	7	3	5	4	1	2	9
9	2	6	8	4	7	3	5	1
1	3	4	2	6	5	8	9	7
7	5	8	1	3	9	2	6	4
5	4	1	9	2	3	6	7	8
2	8	3	4	7	6	9	1	5
6	7	9	5	8	1	4	3	2

Solutions to Yesterday's puzzle

Fill a 9×9 grid with numbers so that each row, column and 3×3 section contain all of the digits between 1 and 9.

UNCERTAINTY OVER ADEN

Saudi-UAE rift worsens Yemen political crisis

ADEN

Uncertainty over the fate of Yemen's southern separatist leader has deepened the political and security crisis in the country's south, while tensions continue between Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. Aidarous al Zubaidi, leader of the UAE backed Southern Transitional Council, skipped a planned trip to Riyadh for talks, triggering confusion and fresh conflict.

The STC later said Zubaidi was in the port city of Aden, overseeing military and security operations. However, it admitted it had lost contact with its delegation that travelled to Saudi Arabia. Saudi backed officials said government forces were advancing towards Aden, though Zubaidi's exact location could not be independently confirmed.

The sudden developments have reduced hopes for a quick resolution to the southern crisis. The standoff has exposed a serious rift between Saudi Arabia and the UAE, long time allies who now support opposing sides in Yemen. Both countries are key players in the coalition fighting the Iran aligned Houthi group.

Saudi officials earlier raised concerns about Zubaidi's disappearance and accused him of moving armed forces and distributing weapons to fuel unrest. The Saudi backed Presidential Leadership Council removed Zubaidi from its membership and referred him to prosecutors on charges including high treason and armed rebellion.

Zubaidi's deputy met Saudi leaders earlier this week and was later tasked with maintaining security in Aden, signaling shifting alliances. Meanwhile, Saudi coalition forces carried out limited airstrikes in southern Yemen, citing security threats.

The crisis follows clashes last month when STC forces seized territory in the south, changing the balance of power. Analysts warn that unless dialogue resumes soon, the dispute could further destabilise Yemen, weaken the anti Houthi coalition, and worsen an already prolonged humanitarian and political conflict across the region.

QUICK READ

Seoul shares hit record on tech rally

Seoul

South Korean shares rose for a fourth day on Wednesday, setting a fresh record as technology and auto stocks gained strongly. The KOSPI index briefly crossed 4,600 points before closing at a historic high above 4,550. Foreign investors led buying, while local institutions and individuals sold shares. Major gains were seen in Samsung Electronics, SK hynix, Hyundai Motor, and Kia after positive tech news. Some airlines and energy stocks fell. The Korean won weakened slightly against the US dollar, while government bond prices ended higher. Market confidence stayed strong despite mixed global cues during early Asian trading.

Domestic investors power Indian markets strongly

New Delhi

Domestic institutional investors gave strong support to Indian markets in 2025, led mainly by mutual funds. Mutual fund equity assets jumped over twenty percent, while total assets also rose sharply. Insurance firms and pension funds increased equity holdings, helped by easier rules. Alternate investment funds and banks also reported healthy growth, showing rising local confidence. Domestic investors bought large amounts of shares during the year. In contrast, foreign investors saw slow asset growth and sold equities amid high valuations and global tensions. Analysts expect this trend to continue as household savings stay market focused nationwide.

Venezuela agrees oil export deal with United States

Venezuela's crude oil is stuck on tankers after a U.S. attacked the country

HOUSTON

Venezuela has agreed to export up to two billion dollars worth of crude oil to the United States under a new deal with Washington, according to statements made. The agreement is expected to redirect oil supplies away from China and ease pressure on Venezuela's strained oil sector.

US President Donald Trump said the deal would involve supplying between 30 and 50 million barrels of sanctioned Venezuelan oil to the United States. He said the oil would be sold at market prices and shipped directly to US ports. The move could help Venezuela avoid deeper production cuts caused by storage shortages.

Venezuela has millions of barrels of crude stuck on tankers after a recent US export blockade. Redirecting these cargoes to American buyers could bring temporary relief to the country's oil industry. Analysts say the plan also supports US refiners that can process heavy crude.

Chevron is currently the only US company authorised to export Venezuelan oil. It has been shipping between 100,000 and 150,000 barrels per day under special permissions. It remains unclear how much revenue Venezuela will directly receive due to ongoing financial sanctions.

US officials said increased oil flows would support jobs and stabilise fuel prices. Talks have also included possible auctions for US buyers and future use of Venezuelan oil in strategic reserves.

Despite the deal, political tensions remain high. Venezuelan officials criticised recent US actions, while markets reacted cautiously. Experts say the agreement signals a shift in energy ties, but long term outcomes will depend on sanctions policy, global demand, and political stability in both countries and wider region going forward.

India hosts National Textiles Ministers Conference 2026

NEW DELHI

The conference will unite Textile Ministers and senior officials from states and Union Territories to discuss policies, investments, sustainability, exports, infrastructure, and technologies under "India's Textiles: Weaving Growth, Heritage, Innovation"

India will host a two day National Textiles Ministers' Conference 2026 in Guwahati with the aim of strengthening the country's textile sector and positioning India as a global manufacturing hub. The event will be organised by the Ministry of Textiles in collaboration with the Government of Assam and will begin on January 8 (today).

The conference will bring together Textile Ministers and senior officials from states and Union Territories to discuss policies, investments, sustainability, exports, infrastructure development and new technologies. It will be held under the theme "India's Textiles: Weaving Growth, Heritage and Innovation".

The initiative supports the government's vision of making India a leading global textile centre by 2030. The focus will be on increasing exports, generating jobs and ensuring inclusive growth while balancing development with cultural heritage.

The inaugural session will be attended by Union Textiles Minister Giriraj Singh, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and Minister of State for Textiles Pabitra Margherita, along with other senior leaders.

Key sessions will cover infrastructure and investment, expanding textile exports, raw materials and fibres, technical textiles, new age fibres and the promotion of handlooms and handicrafts. Special attention will be given to PM MITRA Parks, sustainability goals, environmental compliance and innovation across the value chain.

Ministers and officials are expected to share best practices, regional challenges and policy ideas to strengthen textile clusters across districts. The conference aims to improve Centre and State coordination and create a clear roadmap for a competitive, sustainable and people focused textile industry, helping India secure a place in global markets while supporting traditional artisans.

BlueScope rejects massive takeover bid again

SYDNEY

BlueScope Steel on Wednesday rejected a $9 billion takeover offer, saying it badly undervalued the company. The board said bidders SGH and US-based Steel Dynamics were trying to buy the steelmaker cheaply for the fourth time. Shares ended slightly higher but below the offered price. BlueScope warned the deal relied heavily on debt and would use its strong balance sheet to fund the purchase. Investors said interest was welcome but the price was too low. Analysts believe bidders must raise the offer to win shareholder approval. Large pension funds remain cautious, closely watching talks and future revisions.

India is likely to meet its FY26 fiscal deficit target of Rs 15.79 lakh crore, maintaining fiscal discipline

India's tax revenues set to surge, fiscal deficit seen narrowing

NEW DELHI

India's tax collections are expected to rise strongly in the coming years, helping the government continue its fiscal consolidation plans, according to a new report released on Wednesday. The report by HDFC Bank said gross tax buoyancy may increase to 1.1 in FY27 from a projected 0.64 in FY26, indicating faster tax growth than the overall economy.

The report estimates nominal GDP growth of about 10.1 percent in FY27, compared to an expected 8.5 percent in FY26. Higher economic activity is likely to support stronger tax revenues. Government capital spending is projected to rise by 10.5 percent to around Rs 11.5 to Rs 12 lakh crore, while revenue expenditure may increase by 9.5 percent to nearly Rs 41.9 lakh crore.

India is also expected to meet its fiscal deficit target for FY26. The deficit is estimated at Rs 15.79 lakh crore, close to the budgeted figure of Rs 15.69 lakh crore, or 4.4 percent of GDP. Fiscal discipline is likely to continue in the Union Budget 2026–27, with the deficit target expected to narrow further to 4.2 percent in FY27.

The report projected a decline in the debt to GDP ratio to 55.1 percent in FY27 from 56.1 percent in FY26. Higher government bond supply may keep yields elevated, though RBI support and foreign investments could help stabilise markets.

Separately, policy experts urged tax reforms, wider tax base use of technology, GST expansion, and steps to curb the parallel economy. These measures could strengthen long term growth and improve overall tax efficiency across sectors nationwide.

Crude oil slides as global market tensions rise

TOKYO

Asian markets retreated on Wednesday as crude oil prices fell sharply and investors reacted to rising global political tensions. The slide followed comments by US President Donald Trump that Venezuela would hand over up to fifty million barrels of oil for sale, raising fears of oversupply in global markets. US crude dropped to around fifty six dollars a barrel, while Brent slipped below sixty dollars, extending recent losses.

Stock markets across the region reacted nervously. Japan's Nikkei index fell over one percent, hurt by fresh worries over trade and security after China announced restrictions on exports of dual use items to Japan. Hong Kong shares also declined, ending a short rally. In contrast, Australian stocks edged higher, supported by strong commodity producers.

Investors also moved into safe haven assets. The Japanese yen strengthened as uncertainty spread from South America to East Asia. Gold and industrial metals stayed close to record levels, reflecting ongoing demand for protection against risk.

Market experts said lower oil prices could help the global economy by reducing energy costs, but warned that growing geopolitical uncertainty may cancel out those benefits. Political developments in Venezuela, including changes in leadership and control over oil reserves, remain a key concern.

European markets showed mixed signals, while US stock futures pointed slightly lower. Attention is now turning to upcoming US economic data, including jobs reports, which could shape expectations for future interest rate cuts by the Federal Reserve. Until clarity emerges, analysts expect markets to remain volatile. Traders remain cautious as headlines shift quickly, balancing opportunity with risk across currencies, equities, commodities, and energy markets worldwide today this week ahead.

GCCs dominate India office market in 2025

MUMBAI

India's office property market saw strong growth in 2025 as Global Capability Centres emerged as the biggest occupiers of office space. A new report said GCCs accounted for 38 percent of total leasing, taking up 31.8 million square feet across major cities. This trend has strengthened India's image as a global hub for research, technology, and back office operations.

According to the Knight Frank India report, overall office leasing reached 86.4 million square feet during the year. This marked a 20 percent rise compared to 2024 and crossed the earlier record level. The volume was also 43 percent higher than the pre pandemic peak recorded in 2019, showing steady demand over the last four years.

Bengaluru remained the clear leader in the office market. The city alone captured 47 percent of all GCC leasing activity, totaling 15.2 million square feet. Overall, Bengaluru recorded 29 million square feet of gross leasing, its highest ever figure.

Other cities also posted strong numbers. Hyderabad leased 11.4 million square feet, while Delhi NCR recorded 11.3 million square feet. Pune crossed 10.8 million square feet and Chennai touched 10.1 million square feet. Mumbai came close with 9.8 million square feet.

Salaried Indians work force surges in 2025

NEW DELHI

India's salaried workforce is seeing a sharp rise in high earners, according to a new report released on Wednesday. The share of salaried taxpayers earning more than Rs 30 lakh a year rose from 18.49 percent in 2024 to 23.34 percent in 2025. The data shows strong income growth among middle and upper middle class professionals.

The findings are part of ClearTax's annual study titled 'How India Filed in 2025'. The report studied millions of income tax returns to understand how Indians earn, invest, and grow their money. It shows that career growth and experience are paying off for many workers.

The age group between 40 and 50 years stands out as the strongest earning group. Nearly 38 percent of salaried taxpayers in this bracket earn above Rs 30 lakh annually. This makes them the biggest contributors to income tax collections. Stable careers, long experience, and senior roles are helping salaries peak during these years.

The report also highlights a major change in income patterns. Many taxpayers are no longer dependent only on monthly salaries. A rise in ITR-2 and ITR-3 filings shows growing income from business, trading, and investments.

Investing is now common for many Indians. Most ITR-3 filers reported capital gains, showing that stock markets are part of regular financial planning. Young people are starting early, with tax filings rising among those below 25. Millennials aged 25 to 35 are leading complex tax filings. Crypto assets, however, remain risky side investments rather than mainstream choices. Experts say this trend may reshape India's future tax base and long term household wealth planning across the country.

Finland's specialist talent surge due to Indians

NEW DELHI

Indian professionals are playing a major role in Finland's growing specialist workforce, with a new report showing that they accounted for about 34 percent of specialist level talent moving to the country in 2025. Technology and engineering experts from India are working with leading global and Finnish firms such as Nokia, Kone, Wärtsilä, HCL, Infosys and TCS.

According to a report by Business Finland, around 300 first time specialist residence permits were issued to Indian professionals between January and November 2025. This adds to a strong Indian community of over 20,000 people already living and working in Finland. The data highlights India as one of the most important talent sources for the Nordic nation.

Finland received 7,641 first time work based positive residence permit applications between January and September 2025. Indians made up nearly 10 percent of these applications, showing steady and consistent interest.

Elon xAI raises massive funding

NEW DELHI

Elon Musk's artificial intelligence startup xAI has completed a major funding round worth twenty billion dollars. The funding includes support from leading companies such as Nvidia, Valor Equity Partners, and the Qatar Investment Authority. Other investors involved include Fidelity, Stepstone Group, MGX, Baron Capital, and Cisco's investment arm. The company did not share details about how much each investor contributed or how the money was divided.

Reports say xAI plans to use a large part of the funds to buy powerful Nvidia computer chips. These chips will be rented out over several years, helping investors recover their money. The funding will also help xAI expand its infrastructure, improve its technology, and launch new AI products for users worldwide.

xAI has already raised significant money in the past year but is spending nearly one billion dollars every month. Musk has said the company is expanding its data center in Memphis to meet growing demand. One gigawatt of power can supply hundreds of thousands of homes.

Musk has also shared plans to build one of the world's largest AI training centers using hundreds of thousands of chips.

FASHIONABLE WEALTH CHOICES

Jewellery emerges as key wealth asset: Deloitte Report

NEW DELHI

Indian consumers are increasingly viewing jewellery as a key part of long term wealth creation, according to a new report released on Wednesday. About 86 percent of people surveyed said gold and jewellery remain a preferred asset, almost matching interest in market linked products such as mutual funds and stocks.

The Deloitte India report said the jewellery market is changing, with buyers seeing ornaments not only as family heirlooms but also as daily expressions of identity, lifestyle and value. Around 56 percent of consumers now see jewellery as both an investment and a fashion choice, while 28 percent buy it purely for investment purposes.

Older buyers and men continue to favour investment driven purchases, but younger Indians are pushing a shift towards lighter, versatile designs. Gen Z and millennials are actively diversifying their jewellery choices and adopting everyday wear. The report found that 51 percent of Gen Z prefer silver and 34 percent choose platinum. Nearly half the respondents favour minimalist pieces over heavy sets.

Changing buying occasions are also reshaping demand. Millennials now buy jewellery for birthdays, anniversaries and career milestones like promotions and graduations. Personal purchases such as rings, chains and earrings are rising, while physical stores continue to play a major role due to trust and assurance. Experts say retailers who balance tradition with modern design and efficiency will lead the industry's next growth phase in India over the coming decade, as jewellery remains both a cultural symbol and a practical wealth asset for millions of households nationwide today steadily evolving with younger buyers driving change.

PRESENCE OF IMPURITIES IN THE WATER

The Silent Crisis of India's Failing Water Infrastructure

A Tale of Rust, Negligence, and Lives Lost

On a quiet stretch of Bengaluru's KSFC Layout in early January 2026, something sinister flowed through kitchen taps and underground sumps. For nearly two weeks, families had dismissed the recurring stomach ailments as seasonal flu or bad food. But when residents opened their sump covers to find thick, dark silt and foul-smelling, gray-green sludge coating the bottom, the horrifying truth became undeniable: their drinking water had become a toxic conduit for human waste.The contamination crisis unfolding in Lingarajpuram represents far more than a localized municipal failure. It is a microcosm of a systemic catastrophe slowly poisoning Indian cities—one corroded pipe, one ignored complaint, and one deferred maintenance schedule at a time. While authorities grapple with the aftermath in Bengaluru, the nation's attention remains fixed on Indore, where at least seventeen deaths have been linked to contaminated drinking water since December 2025. Simultaneously, Gandhinagar battles a typhoid epidemic with over 113 cases, and Delhi confronts its fourth water contamination crisis in five months. These are not isolated incidents. They are symptoms of an infrastructure disease that has metastasized across urban India.

THE LINGARAJPURAM CRISIS: WHEN RUST AND SEWAGE COLLIDE

S. Manjunath, a resident of KSFC Layout in Bengaluru, recalls the agonizing progression of the crisis. "This issue has been affecting us for about 15 days, maybe even longer. People started falling sick one after another. In my house, my daughter-in-law had a stomach upset first, then my mother, and later my daughter," she recounts. Like many affected families, Manjunath household contains elderly residents, young children, and a pregnant woman—precisely the vulnerable populations most susceptible to waterborne pathogens.

Between 30 and 40 households along a single lane of the KSFC Layout, situated under the North City Corporation limits, have been directly impacted. However, residents fear the true extent of contamination remains unknown. The symptoms tell a grim story: vomiting, diarrhea, intestinal infections, and stomach disorders severe enough to require hospitalization. For days, families dismissed these ailments as food poisoning or seasonal illness. The early warning signs were subtle—water that appeared diluted in overhead tanks, alternating between dirty and clear phases that residents initially attributed to natural supply variations.

The turning point came when residents compared notes and decided to have their sumps cleaned. What they discovered was shocking. The water accumulated at the bottom of their tanks was not merely discolored; it was a toxic soup of foul-smelling, gray-green liquid—the unmistakable signature of raw sewage. For families with toddlers and infants, the revelation was terrifying. As one resident described it: "Even if you have a basic filter, this kind of contamination is not something it can handle. I have a two-year-old child, and that is what scared us." After escalating their complaints, the Bangalore Water Supply and Sewerage Board (BWSSB) launched an intensive investigation. Using advanced robotic camera technology, engineers traced the contamination to a pipeline that had been in service for four decades. The diagnosis was straightforward yet damning: severe corrosion and rust had compromised the pipe's structural integrity. The pipeline—a galvanized iron (GI) pipe, a type phased out in most modern water systems—had simply reached the end of its functional life. As one resident noted with bitter irony: "The ones here are GI pipes, which have been phased out elsewhere. But this layout never got a facelift." The BWSSB's response combined immediate precaution with long-term remedy. Water supply to the affected area was halted entirely as a safety measure, forcing residents to depend on privately procured tankers. The water board deployed Sanchari Kaveri mobile tankers to supply free potable water while replacement work commenced. Jayaseelan, president of the KSFC Layout Residents' Welfare Association, praised the intervention but highlighted the systemic failure: "The sanitary line here is more than 40 years old.

That's why we are asking for both the water line and the sanitary line to be changed. It is better to be cautious now and do the needful, than wait for the next incident."

The Indore Tragedy: Death in the Details

While Bengaluru's crisis remained contained at the precautionary stage, Indore's contamination crisis had already claimed lives. In the densely populated Bhagirathpura locality, residents had complained about foul-smelling, discolored, yellowish water for more than two months before the outbreak erupted into a full-blown public health emergency. An investigation revealed a horrifying breach: a major leak in the main Narmada water pipeline had occurred directly beneath a toilet at a police check post. Instead of proper septic infrastructure, sewage was routed into a pit situated immediately above the water supply line. This fundamental engineering failure allowed raw human waste to seep directly into the drinking water system. When the contaminated water reached residents' homes, it delivered a cocktail of deadly pathogens—E. coli, Salmonella, and Vibrio cholerae bacteria confirmed through laboratory testing.

The death toll remains contested. Official government figures confirm at least nine deaths, but families allege the true number exceeds seventeen. Among the deceased were a six-month-old infant and six women. Over 2,000 residents fell ill, with more than 200 requiring hospitalization. The outbreak exposed not merely a single maintenance failure, but a cascade of administrative negligence. Despite repeated resident complaints documented over weeks, authorities took no action. It was only after media coverage and mounting deaths that the crisis received urgent attention. A damning Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) audit revealed that Indore lost as much as 65 percent of its drinking water supply through leakage and wastage—among the highest loss rates in the nation. Bhopal fared only marginally better, with losses around 50 percent. The audit documented systemic delays in addressing leakages: repairs were delayed between 22 and 182 days, while work orders took 20 to 178 days to issue.

This cascading bureaucratic lethargy directly enabled contamination.

Gandhinagar's Epidemic: New Pipes, Same Failures

While Indore struggled with decades-old infrastructure, Gandhinagar appeared to have invested in modernization. A ₹257-crore project had been launched to establish 24/7 pressurized water supply to the city—an investment intended to eliminate precisely the contamination problems that plague intermittent systems. Yet by early January 2026, the city was grappling with a typhoid outbreak linked to that same "modernized" system. Over 113 cases of typhoid were confirmed within a single five-day period. Sectors 24, 26, and

28 became epicenters of illness, with the Gandhinagar Civil Hospital forced to open a 30-bed pediatric ward to handle children presenting with high fever and gastrointestinal symptoms. The cause, ironically, lay in the very pipes meant to deliver safety. When engineers laid the new high-pressure water lines, they positioned them in dangerously close proximity to existing sewer lines. When the new system began operating at full pressure, weak points in the aging sewer infrastructure fractured.

The Pune Phenomenon: Too Much Water, Too Little System

Pune presents a paradox. The city receives water from the Khadakwasla dam in abundance—so much that it experiences intra-city distribution chaos. Some neighborhoods receive up to 600 liters per capita per day, while others subsist on barely 100 liters. Despite an installed capacity to treat 599 million liters daily of sewage, the city's water supply and sanitation systems remain severely compromised. The Pune Municipal Corporation identified 175 sites where sewage leaks into the drinking water supply. Areas including Bavdhan, Bhusari Colony, Kharadi, Mhalunge, and Kalyaninagar are plagued by intermittent water supply, low pressure, and persistent contamination. Residents report stomach infections, diarrhea, and waterborne illnesses. Some societies pay nearly 30-35 percent of their annual budgets to purchase water from private tankers—an unsustainable financial burden that transforms access to safe drinking water from a municipal responsibility into a luxury. The root cause remains consistent across all affected Pune neighborhoods: aging water lines (often installed decades ago), poor supply pressure that prevents proper water flow.

Delhi's Recurring NIGHTMARE

The Delhi Jal Board has become synonymous with water contamination in the national capital. The Janakpuri A-1 Block, comprising 926 flats and housing between 3,500 and 4,000 residents, has experienced contamination incidents four times within five months. Independent laboratory testing by residents found E. coli levels as high as 24,000 MPN/100 milliliters—and in one extreme case, 35,00,000 MPN/100 milliliters, indicating active fecal matter in household supplies. As per Bureau of Indian Standards, no bacterial contamination should be detected in any 100-milliliter sample.

The Residents' Welfare Association has accused the Delhi Jal Board of "administrative deceit," pointing out that while officials claim to have resolved the problem through pipeline replacement, the actual progress remains glacially slow.

Of a 730-meter stretch that required replacement, only 205 meters (28 percent) had been completed by late September 2025.

The Systemic Roots: Beyond Individual Failures

The contamination crises unfolding across Indian cities are not random maintenance failures. They are symptoms of systemic dysfunction rooted in four key areas:

INFRASTRUCTURE AGE AND DESIGN

Most urban water systems were designed decades ago using gravity-fed distribution and intermittent supply. These systems are inherently vulnerable to contamination. Replacement requires massive capital investment and engineering redesign, yet maintenance budgets remain inadequate for even basic repairs.

LACK OF DIGITAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Most Indian cities lack GIS mapping of their water and sewage networks. Decisions about pipe replacement, maintenance scheduling, and contamination response are made based on paper records or institutional memory—an inherently unreliable system, Modern smart sensors.

Real-time monitoring systems, and geographic information systems could enable early detection and rapid response.

STAFFING CRISES

CAG audits document vacancies of 18-29 percent in technical and field positions. Water boards lack the personnel to conduct routine inspections, respond to complaints, or implement preventive maintenance programs. This staffing shortage directly translates into delayed leak repairs, missed early warning signs, and reactive rather than proactive management.

FRAGMENTED GOVERNANCE

Responsibility for water supply, sewage, and public health is often split across multiple authorities—water boards, municipal corporations, health departments—that fail to coordinate.

Conclusion: Breaking the Cycle

India stands at a critical juncture. The contamination crises of January 2026—spanning Bengaluru, Indore, Gandhinagar, and Delhi—are not isolated anomalies. They are harbingers of what awaits cities without urgent action. AMRUT 2.0's ₹2,77,000-crore investment provides the financial capacity to transform urban water systems. What remains uncertain is whether political will, institutional capacity, and coordinated governance can match this ambition. The solution is neither mysterious nor undiscovered. Cities implementing 24/7 pressurized systems with GIS mapping and real-time monitoring have eliminated the vast majority of contamination incidents. The question is not "how" but "when." Every month of delay means more contaminated water flowing through pipes. Every quarter of inaction means another family experiencing waterborne illness. Every year of bureaucratic lethargy means another generation scarred by preventable disease.

Geeta and her family in Bengaluru now await the installation of a new water pipeline. The residents of Indore grieve loved ones who died from contamination that should never have occurred. Gandhinagar's families face ongoing typhoid cases from a newly built system that failed through poor engineering coordination.

These crises were not inevitable. They were chosen—through years of deferred maintenance, chronic underfunding, and negligent governance.

ICC willing to work with us to address concerns on playing in India: BCB

Bangladesh board says ICC receptive to security concerns amid India hosting T20 World Cup

DHAKA

The Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) on Wednesday said the International Cricket Council (ICC) has conveyed its willingness to work closely with it to address concerns related to Bangladesh's participation in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup, scheduled to be held in India next month.

The development comes amid heightened tensions following the ouster of Bangladeshi pacer Mustafizur Rahman from the Indian Premier League (IPL) on the Board of Control for Cricket in India's (BCCI) instructions, a move that triggered sharp reactions in Dhaka. In response, a livid BCB had written to the ICC demanding that Bangladesh's four World Cup matches in India be shifted to co-host Sri Lanka, citing safety and security concerns for its players.

In a statement, the BCB said it had received a formal response from the ICC regarding the issues raised by the board, including the request for relocation of matches. "The Bangladesh Cricket Board has received a response from the ICC regarding the Board's expressed concerns over the safety and security of the Bangladesh National Cricket Team in India for the ICC T20 World Cup," the statement said.

According to the BCB, the ICC reiterated its commitment to ensuring Bangladesh's "full and uninterrupted participation" in the tournament. "The ICC has conveyed its willingness to work closely with the BCB to address the concerns raised and has assured that the Board's inputs will be welcomed and duly considered as part of the detailed security planning for the event," it added.

However, the ICC has not issued any public statement on the matter so far.

The ICC Men's T20 World Cup is set to begin on February 7, with India and Sri Lanka serving as co-hosts. Bangladesh are scheduled to play all four of their group-stage matches in India, with fixtures slated in Kolkata and Mumbai.

While the BCB's demand for relocation remains under consideration, officials indicated that discussions with the ICC are ongoing, and further clarity is expected as the tournament approaches.

I am hopeful Shaheen will play T20 WC: Agha

Pakistan captain backs Afridi's recovery, says medical panel will decide final call

KARACHI

Pakistan's T20 captain Salman Ali Agha on Wednesday expressed optimism that pace spearhead Shaheen Shah Afridi will recover in time to feature in next month's ICC Men's T20 World Cup, despite the fast bowler currently undergoing rehabilitation for a knee injury.

Afridi, a cornerstone of Pakistan's pace attack across formats, picked up the injury while fielding during a recent Big Bash League match in Australia. He was subsequently released by Brisbane Heat and recalled by the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) for rehabilitation under the supervision of the board's medical panel at the High Performance Centre in Lahore.

"We are hopeful he will be fit for the World Cup, but the final decision will come from the Board on the advice of the medical panel," Salman told reporters in Dambulla, where Pakistan are set to face Sri Lanka in the opening T20I of the three-match series on Wednesday.

The PCB on Wednesday shared a video of Shaheen undergoing rehabilitation, though it did not specify the severity of the injury or provide a timeline for his return to full fitness. This is not the first time the left-arm pacer has faced knee trouble, having previously suffered a similar injury in 2021 during a Test match in Galle that sidelined him for several months.

The upcoming T20 World Cup will be co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka, with Pakistan scheduled to play all their matches in Sri Lanka. Salman said the ongoing bilateral series would serve as vital preparation for the tournament.

"We have managed to put together a balanced and strong side for the World Cup. This series will help the players a lot, especially those who haven't played much cricket in Sri Lanka," he said.

Pakistan have named only one debutant, Khawaja Nafay, in their squad for the Sri Lanka series. The squad also marks the return of experienced all-rounder Shadab Khan, who has been recalled after an eight-month absence following shoulder surgery. Shadab earned his comeback after impressive performances in the Big Bash League in December, giving Pakistan an added boost ahead of the global event.

India skipper stresses overseas exposure, longer camps crucial for confidence, chemistry ahead of qualifiers

Need more exposure trips to improve: Basketball team captain

CHENNAI

Standing tall at 6 feet 11 inches, India men's basketball team captain Palpreet Singh Brar may cut an imposing figure, but off the court he is soft-spoken and measured. On the hardwood, however, the Punjab-born centre transforms into a vocal and aggressive leader — a necessity, he believes, for guiding the national side through tough international challenges.

Speaking on the sidelines of the Senior National Basketball Championship here, Palpreet underlined the urgent need for more overseas exposure trips if India are to improve their performances on the continental stage. "Exposure tours help build chemistry and confidence among players. Without them, it becomes very difficult to compete at a higher level," he said.

India endured a disappointing start to the 2027 FIBA World Cup Asian Qualifiers, losing twice to Saudi Arabia — 51-75 in Riyadh and 57-81 in Chennai — last November. Placed in Group D, India will face Qatar on February 28 and Lebanon on March 3 in their next set of qualifiers. Palpreet, currently representing Railways at the nationals, will lead the team in these crucial assignments.

Coached by American Scott Flemming, the Indian side relies heavily on three-point shooting. However, their struggles were evident against Saudi Arabia, with the team managing just 18.3 per cent from beyond the arc in Riyadh and 20 per cent in Chennai, as per FIBA statistics.

Palpreet felt short training camps were another major drawback. "A 20-day or one-month camp is not enough. Before the Asia Cup, we had exposure trips to Dubai and Doha before playing Bahrain and Iraq. Those trips made a big difference. Before the World Cup qualifiers, we didn't get that kind of preparation," he explained.

He echoed coach Flemming's earlier concerns about limited preparation time, as players were scattered across leagues abroad. "In practice games, we mostly play junior teams. They benefit, not us," Palpreet said.

Looking ahead, he welcomed the Basketball Federation of India's plan to launch the India Basketball League later this year. "If our aim is to reach the Olympics, exposure is key. Teams like Lebanon and Iran spend months playing in the US and Europe. We need similar opportunities," he added.

Meanwhile, Railways and Karnataka (men), along with Railways and Kerala (women), have qualified for the quarterfinals of the championship, while Tamil Nadu's men's and women's teams are a win away from the last eight.

Sindhu overcomes Chinese-Taipei opponent in opening round

Returning from injury, PV Sindhu registers confident win to enter Malaysia Open pre-quarters

KUALA LUMPUR

Indian badminton star PV Sindhu made a confident return to competitive action, defeating Chinese-Taipei's Sung Shuo Yun in the women's singles opening round of the Malaysia Open Super 1000 tournament here on Wednesday.

The 30-year-old former world champion, who had taken an extended break from the BWF World Tour since October last year to recover from a foot injury, prevailed 21-14, 22-20 in a match that lasted just over 51 minutes. Ranked 18th in the world, Sindhu showed no visible signs of discomfort as she outplayed the lower-ranked Sung to move into the pre-quarterfinals.

Sindhu started on an authoritative note, racing to a 6-2 lead in the opening game and maintaining complete control to pocket it comfortably. Her powerful smashes and sharp court coverage kept Sung under pressure, allowing the Indian to close out the first game 21-14.

The second game, however, proved to be a far sterner test. Sung surged ahead to lead 11-4 at the interval and later extended her advantage, forcing Sindhu to dig deep. The Indian gradually found her rhythm, clawing back to level the score at 13-all. Sung again moved ahead to lead 17-14, but Sindhu's experience and composure came to the fore as she drew level once more. At 20-all, Sindhu held her nerve to win the final two points and seal the contest.

The victory improved Sindhu's head-to-head record against Sung to 2-0 and set up a challenging round-of-16 clash against Japan's world No.9 Tomoka Miyazaki. Miyazaki progressed after her South Korean opponent Sim Yu Jin retired hurt during their match.

Earlier in the day, India suffered a setback in mixed doubles as Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto exited the tournament, losing a closely fought three-game match to American pair Presley Smith and Jennie Gai.

Later on Wednesday, India's top men's doubles duo of Chirag Shetty and Satwiksairaj Rankireddy are scheduled to begin their campaign against Chinese-Taipei's Yang Po-Hsuan and Lee Jhe-Hue.

Jacob Duffy named in New Zealand's squad for the T20 WC

WELLINGTON

Pacer Jacob Duffy was on Wednesday named in New Zealand's squad for the ICC Men's T20 World Cup, earning a maiden call-up after a stellar 2025 in which he emerged as one of international cricket's most prolific wicket-takers.

The 31-year-old enjoyed a breakthrough year, claiming 81 wickets across formats to eclipse Sir Richard Hadlee's 40-year-old New Zealand record of 79 wickets in a calendar year. His consistency also lifted him to second place in the ICC men's T20I bowling rankings. Although the only member of a squad boasting a combined 1,064 T20I caps who has not previously featured at a T20 World Cup, Duffy's inclusion was widely expected. He will strengthen an experienced pace unit featuring Matt Henry, Lockie Ferguson, Adam Milne and all-rounder Jimmy Neesham, with Kyle Jamieson named as the reserve fast bowler. The tournament will be co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka from February 7 to March 8.

All-rounder Mitchell Santner will captain the side and lead a strong spin group alongside Ish Sodhi, Michael Bracewell, Glenn Phillips and Rachin Ravindra. Santner and Sodhi both played in the 2016 edition in India. Batting group remains settled.

ISL restart followed due process: Chaubey

CHENNAI

After months of uncertainty marked by court proceedings, prolonged negotiations and intense deliberations, the Indian Super League (ISL) is set to kick off on February 14. All India Football Federation (AIFF) president Kalyan Chaubey said the governing body took care to ensure there were no procedural lapses before announcing the resumption of the country's premier football competition.

The 2025-26 ISL season, which was initially clouded by doubts following the expiry of the Master Rights Agreement (MRA) between the AIFF and Football Sports Development Limited (FSDL) on December 8 last year, will now feature 14 clubs, with Odisha FC joining the league at a late stage. The tournament will be played in a truncated format, with teams completing 91 matches on a single home-and-away basis, and is expected to run until June 15, subject to fixture finalisation.

Chaubey, speaking from Delhi, acknowledged that the period had been challenging but credited dialogue and cooperation between stakeholders for the breakthrough. "We wanted to ensure that the constitution is respected, as directed by the Supreme Court, and that there are no legal or procedural gaps in our decision," he said.

He explained that following the AIFF's annual general meeting on December 20, constitutional provisions posed challenges for prospective bidders responding to the Request for Proposal (RFP), despite four bidders raising as many as 234 queries. To address this, a nine-member AIFF-ISL coordination committee was formed, comprising five club representatives and four AIFF members, giving clubs a majority voice in discussions.

The committee held six meetings between December 22 and 29 and deliberated on league formats and budgets, considering options such as a two-conference system and a traditional home-and-away format before finalising the latter. An AIFF executive committee meeting on Tuesday reviewed all proposals to ensure compliance with constitutional and legal requirements.

Chaubey also revealed that AIFF has committed to contributing 40 per cent of the league's central pool, capped at Rs 25 crore, translating to a Rs 10 crore contribution. Additionally, clubs have been granted financial relief, including a moratorium allowing them to defer payment of a Rs 1 crore league fee until June. "This arrangement is for this season alone," Chaubey said, adding that clubs retain full commercial autonomy. "After everything, it's time to get back to playing football."

National boxing: Lovlina edges Saweety; Panghal survives Priyanshu's challenge

GREATER NOIDA

Two of India's biggest boxing names were pushed to the limit but emerged victorious as Olympic bronze medallist Lovlina Borgohain and former world silver medallist Amit Panghal advanced at the National Boxing Championships. The highlight of the day was the much-anticipated women's 75kg second-round clash between Lovlina and former world championship silver medallist Saweety Boora at the Gautam Buddha University. Living up to expectations, the bout turned into a fierce contest, with Lovlina eventually prevailing 3-2 in a split decision.

Saweety came out aggressively, relying on speed and constant pressure, catching Lovlina off guard in the opening round, which she comfortably took. The Assamese boxer, however, regrouped well, using her height and reach to keep Saweety at bay in the second round. The bout grew increasingly physical, at times resembling a wrestling contest, with both boxers receiving warnings from the referee. Lovlina edged the second round narrowly and carried that momentum into the third to seal the win.

Saweety expressed disappointment with the verdict but remained defiant. "If you see the bout closely, none of the punches she was awarded points for touched me. But I am used to such situations. I have never had it easy and know I must dominate completely to be declared the winner," she said.

In the men's 55kg category, seasoned campaigner Amit Panghal narrowly avoided an upset against Haryana youngster Priyanshu. The younger boxer stunned Panghal by taking the opening round, but the former world silver medallist drew on his experience to win the second and dominate the third, securing a 3-2 victory.

Women — 51kg: Nitu Ghanghas (Har) bt Priya (HP) RSC; 54kg: Sakshi Chaudhary (SSCB) bt Manasa Veni Anakapalli (AP) RSC; 75kg: Lovlina Borgohain (Asm) bt Saweety Boora (Har) 3-2.

Men — 55kg: Jadumani Singh (SSCB) bt R. Parthiban (TN) RSC; Amit Panghal (SSCB) bt Priyanshu (Har) 3-2; 60kg: Hussamuddin (SSCB) bt Ashish (HP) 5-0.

MESSI reveals his private, off-pitch personality

Football icon Lionel Messi opens up about solitude, structure, and life away from spotlight

MIAMI

Lionel Messi, widely regarded as one of the greatest footballers of all time, has revealed a candid and lesser-known side of his personality, admitting that away from the pitch he prefers solitude and values time alone to unwind.

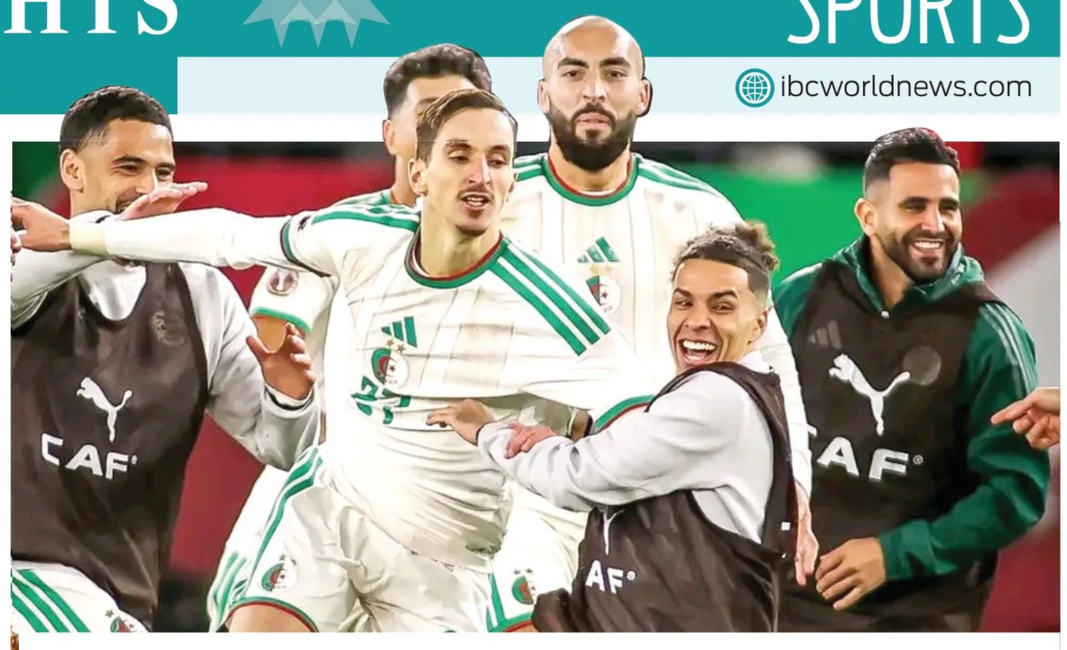
Known for letting his football do the talking, the Argentina captain has long avoided the limelight off the field, choosing a quiet personal life over public theatrics. Unlike many modern superstars, Messi has rarely sought attention through controversy or bold statements, instead focusing on performances that have defined an era and earned him admiration across generations.

In a recent interview, the eight-time Ballon d'Or winner spoke openly about how he disconnects from the constant demands of football and family life. I really like being alone, I enjoy being alone," Messi said, offering an unusually frank glimpse into his private world.

With three young children at home, Messi admitted the energy and chaos can sometimes be overwhelming. "The mess at home with the three kids running around everywhere ends up saturating me and I like a moment of solitude," he explained, adding that those quiet moments help him reset mentally.

Messi also spoke about his deep need for routine and structure, acknowledging that sudden changes can affect his mood. "I'm very structured. If I have the day organised in a certain way and something changes in the middle, it affects me," he said. He credited his wife, Antonella Roccuzzo, with understanding his emotions better than he does himself, noting that small, seemingly trivial things can influence how he feels.

On the professional front, Messi recently added another milestone to his glittering career by leading Inter Miami to their first-ever Major League Soccer title. The Argentine enjoyed a remarkable season, scoring 29 goals and providing 19 assists in 28 matches, underlining that even as he embraces solitude off the pitch, his impact on it remains as powerful as ever.



Boulbina stunner takes Algeria through, Diallo sparkles for I. Coast

RABAT/MARRAKESH

Late drama and individual brilliance seal AFCON quarter-final berths in Morocco matches

Adil Boulbina and Amad Diallo delivered moments of decisive brilliance as Algeria and Ivory Coast secured contrasting victories to complete the Africa Cup of Nations quarter-final line-up in Morocco.

In Rabat, substitute Boulbina struck a dramatic winner deep into extra time to hand Algeria a tense 1-0 victory over the Democratic Republic of Congo. With the contest seemingly headed for a penalty shoot-out, Boulbina was released down the left in the 119th minute, drove into the box and unleashed a ferocious strike that found the net, sending the largely pro-Algeria crowd of 18,837 into raptures.

The goal capped an intense but cagey encounter between two continental heavyweights, a match that promised much but often lacked cutting edge in the final third. Algeria captain Riyad Mahrez and teenage sensation Ibrahim Maza were both substituted before the end of regulation time as clear chances remained scarce.

Boulbina, who plays his club football with Al-Duhail in Qatar, was an unlikely hero, making just his second substitute appearance of the tournament. "I have always dreamed of playing for the national team," an emotional Boulbina said. "I had my chance, I scored, and the most important thing is that we qualified."

Despite the heartbreak, DR Congo can still look ahead to an intercontinental play-off in March, with a chance to qualify for their first World Cup since 1974.

Earlier in Marrakesh, Amad Diallo starred as defending champions Ivory Coast brushed aside Burkina Faso 3-0 to reach the quarter-finals, becoming the first title holders since 2010 to reach the last eight. Diallo powered home the opener in the 20th minute before setting up Yan Diomande for a superb second just before half-time. Substitute Bazoumana Toure added a third late on.

The quarter-finals begin on Friday with Senegal facing Mali and Cameroon taking on hosts Morocco. Algeria will meet in-form Nigeria on Saturday, followed by Ivory Coast's clash with seven-time champions Egypt.

Coco Guff Drags US into United Cup Semis as Swiatek Also Wins

PERTH

Coco Gauff produced a stirring double act to haul defending champions the United States into the United Cup semi-finals on Wednesday, while world number two Iga Swiatek powered Poland into the last four with a commanding display of her own.

Fourth-ranked Gauff, eager to respond after a rare setback earlier in the tournament, set the tone for the Americans in their quarter-final against Greece with a confident 6-3, 6-2 victory over former world number three Maria Sakkari in Perth. The 21-year-old looked far sharper than in her previous outing, dictating play from the baseline and keeping errors to a minimum to give the US a crucial early lead.

Greece hit back when Stefanos Tsitsipas defeated an out-of-sorts Taylor Fritz 6-4, 7-5, leveling the tie and forcing the contest into a decisive mixed doubles match. Under pressure once again, Gauff rose to the occasion, teaming up with Christian Harrison to edge past Tsitsipas and Sakkari 4-6, 6-4, 10-8 in a tense match tie-break. "Definitely a much better match today," Gauff said, after bouncing back from her first-ever United Cup defeat on Monday.

US Patent Office denies Athletics trademarks, but club can refile

Trademark ruling delays Las Vegas branding plans as franchise prepares for Nevada move

LAS VEGAS

The U.S. Patent and Trademark Office has denied, for now, the Athletics' applications to trademark the names "Las Vegas Athletics" and "Vegas Athletics," citing concerns that the term "Athletics" is too generic and could cause confusion even when linked to Las Vegas. The decision, issued on December 29, does not close the door on the club's branding plans. The Athletics have three months to seek an extension and up to six months to submit a new application addressing the objections. The franchise intends to relocate permanently to Las Vegas in 2028.

According to the Patent and Trademark Office, the word "Athletics" is commonly used to describe sports activities and may not be distinctive enough for exclusive trademark protection. This stance comes despite the nickname's deep roots in baseball history. The club has been known as the Athletics since 1901, beginning in Philadelphia before moving to Kansas City in 1955 and then Oakland in 1968.

A similar issue recently affected the NHL's Utah franchise, which was denied the "Yetis" nickname earlier this month due to potential confusion with existing brands. Utah has since adopted the name "Mammoth."

The Athletics are currently playing in West Sacramento, California, after leaving Oakland last year. During their temporary stay, which will last three seasons, the team is competing under the simplified name "Athletics."

Construction is underway on a new $2 billion, 33,000-seat stadium on the Las Vegas Strip. Club officials told the Las Vegas Stadium Authority in December that the project remains on schedule to open ahead of the 2028 Major League Baseball season. Nevada and Clark County have approved up to $380 million in public funding, with the team committed to covering the remainder.

As preparations for the move continue, the Athletics have made significant roster investments. Recently, the club signed left fielder Tyler Soderstrom to a seven-year, $86 million contract, the richest in franchise history, and acquired second baseman Jeff McNeil from the New York Mets. Long-term deals have also been secured for Brent Rooker, Lawrence Butler and manager Mark Kotsay, underlining the franchise's intent to establish stability ahead of its Las Vegas debut.

Record-Breaking Opening Week Thrills Fans across South Africa

JOHANNESBURG

The Betway SA20 Season 4 has exploded into life with a record-breaking opening week that has thrilled cricket fans across South Africa, delivering high-octane action, packed stadiums and unforgettable moments both on and off the field.

Crowds have streamed through the turnstiles nationwide, with seven matches already sold out, creating the electric atmosphere that has become synonymous with the Betway SA20. The tournament burst into action at Newlands, where defending champions MI Cape Town and Durban's Super Giants treated fans to a breathtaking run-fest in the season opener. A staggering 449 runs were scored on the night, featuring 25 sixes and 40 boundaries, setting the tone for a spectacular campaign.

Durban's Super Giants' imposing 232/5 was the highest total ever recorded at Newlands, surpassing the 204/3 scored by Sunrisers Eastern Cape in the 2024 final. Despite the loss, MI Cape Town's Ryan Rickelton lit up Season 4 with a sublime 113 off 65 balls, especially notable given that no centuries were scored during the entire Season 3.

The opening week has been marked by several firsts. The Wanderers hosted its maiden Betway SA20 Super Over on New Year's Day as Joburg Super Kings and Durban's Super Giants played out a thrilling tie. Joburg eventually prevailed, with Rilee Rossouw smashing Noor Ahmad for two boundaries to send a packed Bullring into raptures.

Derby clashes have added further spice, with Joburg Super Kings defeating Pretoria Capitals at Centurion for the first time in four seasons. Paarl Royals also made history by completing a double over Western Cape rivals MI Cape Town, winning at both Boland Park and Newlands for the first time.

Two-time champions Sunrisers Eastern Cape have enjoyed their best-ever start, winning their first two matches with bonus points. Marco Jansen and Ottneil Baartman became the first bowlers to cross 50 wickets in SA20 history, with Baartman currently leading the charts with 11 wickets.

Even off the field, excitement has soared, with six fans already claiming prizes in the Betway Catch R2 million giveaway, underlining a sensational start to Season 4.

Canada forward responds to criticism, inspires Juventus to emphatic Serie A victory

Jonathan David redeems himself with goal and assist in Juventus' 3-0 win over Sassuolo

MILAN

Jonathan David silenced his critics with a decisive second-half performance, scoring a goal and providing an assist as Juventus cruised to a 3-0 victory over Sassuolo in Serie A on Tuesday.

The Canada international had come under scrutiny after missing a crucial penalty in Saturday's 1-1 home draw against Lecce, but coach Luciano Spalletti kept faith in the forward by naming him in the starting lineup. David repaid that confidence in style, playing a central role as Juventus pulled away after a cagey first half.

An own goal from Sassuolo defender Tarik Muharemovic shortly before the interval gave Juventus a slender advantage at the break, but the contest was effectively settled in the space of two minutes early in the second half. In the 62nd minute, David showed great awareness to set up Fabio Miretti, whose composed finish doubled Juve's lead. Just a minute later, David capped his display by getting on the scoresheet himself, sparking jubilant celebrations that saw the entire Juventus squad, including substitutes and Spalletti, rush to embrace him.

The win kept fourth-placed Juventus level on points with Roma, who also recorded a 2-0 victory away to Lecce. Both sides sit three points behind Serie A leaders Inter Milan, although Juventus, Roma and Inter have all played two matches fewer than the teams above them.

Elsewhere, Roma bounced back from weekend disappointment with a composed performance in Lecce. Evan Ferguson opened the scoring in the 14th minute after a clever exchange involving Paulo Dybala, while Artem Dovbyk sealed the win in the 71st minute by tapping in from close range following a corner. Dovbyk later limped off with a leg issue, though Lecce remained 16th in the standings.

In another match, Como strengthened their push toward the Champions League places with a 3-0 win over Pisa. Goals from Máximo Perrone and Anastasios Douvikas put Como in control, while goalkeeper Jean Butez saved a penalty before Douvikas converted from the spot in stoppage time to complete the victory.

India Star Padikkal, With 600 Runs In VHT, Breaks Silence on NZ ODIs Snub

BENGALURU

Devdutt Padikkal has been in blistering form in the ongoing Vijay Hazare Trophy, amassing over 600 runs, yet a spot in India's ODI squad continues to elude the left-handed opener. Speaking candidly about being overlooked for the recent series against New Zealand, Padikkal displayed patience and perspective amid India's intense competition for batting slots.

"I wouldn't say it was disappointing," Padikkal told. "Yes, I was looking at the selection and seeing what would come out. But at the same time, I understood that there are so many batters in the line and everyone has been doing really well. And it's not that easy to push into that one-day side."

Padikkal's journey reflects a calculated evolution of his game. Initially molded for Test cricket, he adapted to the high-strike-rate demands of the IPL under the guidance of Royal Challengers Bangalore coaches Dinesh Karthik and Andy Flower. "They helped me understand how I can maximise my game in T20 and how to play phases after 7-14 overs," he said.

Yet it is the 50-over format where Padikkal feels most at home. "In one-dayers, it's all about tempo and pattern. Luckily, I found that early in my 50-over career and it's helped me anchor innings while still applying pressure," he explained. His approach is simple: negotiate the new ball, build pressure on bowlers, and adapt to the match situation.

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